# Power Playground

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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To Smiley and Moloto: for luck on your endless yearning to be understood

To Mom: for your unwavering support and constant push.

To Candice: who believed and understood.

To Ivor and Noah: for inspiration.

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# Abstract

Communities on the Cape Flats of the Western Cape have become synonymous with 'overcrowding, poverty, and squatters' (Pinnock, 2016: 12). Segregation under the apartheid regime forcibly placed Black and Coloured citizens in these areas. These areas have since become eclectic linguistic platforms where many languages form part of the daily liveliness. One of the registers used, is *sabela*. This is a register born in the prison gangs that has filtered out into the streets, and schools within the surrounding areas. This study, conducted in a school on the Cape Flats, follows the linguistic resources deployed by two Grade 9 boys, as they negotiate their way through different interactions within the informal school setting.

The study is based on Linguistic Ethnography (Rampton, 2004), and draws on a view of language as a social practice (Fairclough 1989/ 2001), with particular focus on the contexts (Blommaert, 2005) that inform interactions. The important influence of different discourses in the linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu, 1977) frame the analysis of interactions, and evidence of performativity (Butler, 1990) and footing (Goffman, 1981) are seen as an important factors when investigating abilities to perform particular identities. Hence my research question is: How does *sabela* function within the linguistic repertoires of two boys in informal spaces at a School on the Western Cape Flats?

The data collected consists of audio recordings made over the period of five days, during the two interval sessions of each day, as well as interviews conducted with research participants.

The findings showed that the boys had a wide linguistic repertoire that could be strategically deployed. They drew on many different resources from their repertoires with different effects, *sabela* was drawn on as a signifier of power both in the informal school space and in interactions.

# Contents

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Rationale and Research Aim

Much has been written about urban youth languages and the different varieties thereof within South Africa. Most research has been conducted in the Gauteng Province on language phenomena such as *tsotsitaal, flaaitaal* and *iscamtho.* (Hurst, 2009; Hurst and Mesthrie, 2013a; Hurst and Mesthrie 2013b; Rudwick, 2005). As a teacher at a Cape Town High School which serves surrounding working class areas it has become clear to me that urban youth languages are alive in the Western Cape as well.

On many occasions I have overheard and witnessed ways in which students have used a form of youth language, known to them as *sabela,* in their daily conversations and interactions. Most strikingly I have noticed how an inexplicable amount of 'power' and 'status' seems to be given to those who have a perceived better command over this way of speaking. For example, I have noticed that when a student speaks to another (in or out of the classroom), the one who uses *sabela* seems to be placed in a powerful position, in other words they always command. By this I mean they always exercise power in the sense that they elicit a reaction. The informal school community becomes host to many different expressions of the lives of young working class South African scholars. Where a power play does exist, it is governed predominantly by the ability of certain individuals to converse in *sabela*. I use the word power in alignment with Fairclough (1989:39) when he states that power concerns 'powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants'.

I believe that this power is attributed to certain individuals because they are able to call on *sabela* as a resource from their linguistic repertoires. As a language teacher and researcher I am fascinated by the way people use language in creative and distinct ways. The allure of uncovering the intricacies of this language use through research has led me to the following aim:

to study the informal language practices of Grade 9 male learners at a school in a poverty stricken area[1] and investigate their use of the *sabela* repertoire, with a particular focus on how it affects their power relations among peers.

## Background

The Cape Flats of the Western Cape has become well known for crime and the notorious 'number' gangs. As with other growing urban areas in the world, gangsterism becomes rife as communities are formed, and different ways are identified by these gangs to become exclusive. The reasons for this are described by Van Wyk (2005), who writes that since the birth of democracy 'crime has increased dramatically in South Africa as a result of the lapse of tight state control in communities and on borders, which co-existed in the apartheid regime' (2005:1). This fact is also highlighted by Lemanski (2006) who writes that South Africa has witnessed an 'explosion of crime' (2006:1) since the demise of apartheid. Particular mention of the Cape Flats area is made by Douglas-Hamilton (1995) who describes gang activity as 'endemic' to this area. Van Wyk (2005) further writes that the influence of these gangs has spilled over into local high schools, and this has increased the gang membership of learners at these schools. Ward and Bakhuis (2010) explain that children and adolescents have always been part of gang structures in Cape Town, with gang activities of young children beginning at the tender age of 12. Dixon (2002) argues that crime and gangsterism in general are a typical characteristic of societies that are going through transition.

Enter *sabela.* Lewis (2006) writes of *sabela* that it was born in the prisons of South Africa and is a particular practice of the numbers gangs. Lewis explains that *sabela* is a register that consists of a mixture of words, symbols and colours. The register is a mix of elements from English, Afrikaans, Xhosa and Zulu. These are the four most widely spoken languages in South Africa. The language use developed as a code for prisoners to identify themselves as part of a certain gang. As time went on these prison gangs spilled out, no longer confined only to the four corners of the prison. These gangs began to form outside of the prisons and in local communities. Lewis

[1] Names of school and participants in this research have been changed to protect identities

(2006) also makes mention of how the use of *sabela* itself has become a signifier of gangsterism and criminal activity among youths in South Africa. Pinnock (2016) writes that s*abela* was born in the late 1930s in prisons across South Africa with the purpose of exclusion. The prison guards of the apartheid era were the enemies of the prisoners, and they were not to know about the plans and secret lives of those in their 'care'. The need for the language in that sense has long been forgotten, but the number gangs are still firmly rooted in ritual (Pinnock, 2016). And the language use has filtered out of the prisons, and been watered down. The perception of the prison language is embedded in decades of stories, anecdotes and myths about how the number gangs are violent, but clandestinely woven into the poverty-stricken communities of the Western Cape.

Hurst and Mesthrie (2013a) write that urban hybrid youth varieties of language flourish in South Africa and explain how these languages have been categorised in many different ways by different researchers. They explain how the foundations of these languages in South Africa can be traced back to the 1980's where gangsterism was rife and the need for secrecy was huge. The version of slang spoken in Cape Town is identified as a working class version of prison language, named 'Gamtaal'. (The word 'gam' means 'descendent of Ham', disreputable, outcast; the word taal is Afrikaans for language). In my understanding this refers to a version of slang that is spoken only in the Western Cape.

From the many categorisations of urban hybrid languages in the literature, I will pick out one in particular, where Stone (1995) argues that these variations of languages spoken by certain communities are antilanguages. I would argue that s*abela* can most certainly be termed as an antilanguage. The idea of an antilanguage is born from Halliday (1976) who defines antilanguage as the language of an anti-society which is set up within another society as a conscious alternative to it. Among all criteria that Halliday offers as fundamental to a language being defined as an antilanguage, he highlights that effective communication within the antilanguage depends on the exchange of meanings that are inaccessible to an outsider/ non-member of that specific speech community. This arguably is one of the foremost reasons for the rise of the *sabela* language form in the Western Cape.

The use of this kind of language among certain young[2] South Africans could be tied to many reasons. Hurst (2009) argues a case for the urban identity that is attached to the use of youth languages. Youths are quoted as saying that youth language creates a form of camaraderie among them and that it offers them a sense of belonging. Mesthrie and Hurst (2013b) have aptly named one of their papers 'When you hang with the guys it keeps you in style'. This shows that there is a desirable urban identity that is attached to being able to converse in antilanguages. These languages offer youths a space, and a distinct colour in our rainbow nation.

During preliminary conversations about the *sabela* register with my key informant, I discovered that to be considered as a credible speaker of *sabela*, you had to be taught the language by a gang member, who would then become your 'blackboard'. I found it particularly interesting that a school analogy was being used here. The person who teaches you this form of language is known as the 'blackboard', which implies that it is the place you learn from. Blackboards are still a constant in schools in these working class areas[3]. The student however did admit that most people learn the language through observation, or by overhearing others speak the language. The credibility of the speaker would only come in to question if they were questioned by a real gang member, in which case they would have to identify the gang rank of the person who has served as their 'blackboard'. Inability to offer this information would have negative consequences. In a school's informal community these factors could play a major part. People who have a better ability to converse using *sabela* seem to be given a great deal of status by their peers, regardless of their academic ability. In a class situation for example, I have often witnessed how a high level of noise in a class would immediately die down to pin-dropping silence if one of the learners would speak to another using *sabela* in an aggressive tone.

## Research Question

Having explained the background to my research I now present my research question as follows:

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[2] Here I refer to 'Coloured' teenagers as they were categorized under the apartheid regime

[3] This is not simply a metaphor used by my informant but considered as the general principle among those aware of gang culture

**How does *sabela* function within the linguistic repertoires of two boys in informal spaces at a School on the Western Cape Flats?**

- **What resources form part of the two boys' linguistic repertoires?**
- **To what purpose and with what effect do they employ *sabela* as a resource within their linguistic repertoires?**

## The site and the participants

My research was conducted within the school where I taught at the time. The school is situated in the Northern Suburbs of the Western Cape, and serves students from four poverty stricken communities from the surrounding area. The correlation between poverty and crime was discussed earlier, and for this reason gang activity is expected to be rife in the surrounding areas and within the school. Due to the gang activity of some of the students in the school, it is clear that some of them are employing *sabela* in their language practices and for this main reason I have chosen this particular school as the site for my research.

There were three participants who took part in this study. Two of these were Grade 9 learners, Smiley and Moloto (pseudonyms), who recorded their informal conversations by wearing audio recorders for the research. The third participant in my research was a past pupil of mine who acted as a key informant. I chose these participants mainly because I have witnessed their language practices within the formal and informal school spaces, and I am aware that they are making use of the language style I wish to study in my research.[4]

In this chapter I have outlined the rationale and aim of this research, as well as a preliminary discussion of the research site and participants. I will now go on to present the framework and literature by which my research is informed.

[4] More information about research participants will follow in Chapter 4

# Chapter Outline

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

**Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review**

An overview of the literature relevant to this study is discussed in this chapter and theoretical concepts, which inform this research, are described with reference to how they have been useful. The main ideas which this chapter explores are a view of language as a social practice (Fairclough 1989/ 2001), with particular focus on the contexts (Blommaert, 2005) that inform interactions, the important influence of different discourses in the linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu, 1977) that will frame the analysis of interactions, and evidence of performativity (Butler, 1990) and footing (Goffman, 1981) that are seen as an important factors when investigating abilities to perform particular identities.

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter offers a description of the research design and methodology used in the current study. I explain how I collected and analysed the data and discuss ethical considerations.

**Chapter 4: Power Playground**

A discussion of the context of the school at which the data was collected precedes detailed descriptions of my research participants and the language infrastructure of the school. I then go on to present my analysis of interactional data and my interpretations of the use of *sabela* in the boys' linguistic repertoires.

**Chapter 5: Conclusion**

In this closing chapter, I consider the implications of the data analysis with

regard to initial research goals and the conceptual framework.

# Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Having introduced literature on identity and language practices of youths in urban spaces as well as 'antilanguages' in Chapter 1, in this chapter I expand on these themes and outline the theoretical resources that are used in my research. This research is based on the theoretical approach to language as a social practice that underpins Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, Fairclough 1989/2001) and also draws on Bourdieu's (1977) theorising of the relationship between language and symbolic power. I introduce Goffman's notion of 'footing' and Butler's notion of 'performativity' to explore the idea of performing identity through language use.

## Language as Social Practice

Fairclough (1989/ 2001) offers three main reasons for understanding language as a social practice.

Firstly, Fairclough argues that language is part of society and not external to it. The point being made here is that there is an internal and dialectical relationship between language and society. This means that the way language is produced and received happens in a manner that is determined socially, and has certain social effects. Language therefore exists within social relations and cannot be separated from society. For example, communication between families is shaped by the social responsibilities of families, and they have social effects on different aspects of family life within society. Fairclough (1989) further argues this point when he writes that social phenomena are linguistic. He argues that the language activities which come about in different social contexts are not simply part of the social context, but that they are constitutive of that social context. In a teaching context for example, linguistic rules govern the pedagogical relationship between the school body and the learners which it serves. A teacher addresses a learner in a certain manner, and the learner addresses the teacher in a certain manner, reproducing and reflecting the hierarchical relationship between them, and constituting each other as teacher and learner.

Secondly, Fairclough (1989) argues that we should place importance on viewing language as a social practice. It is a practice which is deeply rooted in social aspects, and relationships. He argues that we only fully understand language once we have analysed the relationship that exists between texts, processes of production and reception, and the social conditions in which they are produced. There is an intricate relationship between a text, the processes by which it is produced and interpreted, and the social conditions which govern its production and interpretation. Text in this sense concerns written and verbal texts. If we again look at the schooling context, the social context of a school governs how things are done. It is a particular kind of school, so learners wear a certain uniform, address teachers in a certain way, stand behind their desks waiting for the teacher to greet them before being seated etc. The social conditions govern how the teaching and learning takes place, and how learners and teachers address each other.

Lastly, Fairclough (1989) argues that language is a socially constructed process, conditioned by other non-linguistic parts of society. A mutually constitutive relationship exists between language and discourse, and should be understood as a relationship that is bi-directional. The point being made is that language and discourse are constrained by the orders of discourse, a term coined by Foucault (1971), in society and social practice. This quite simply can be defined as 'the way in which things need to happen'/ 'the order of the day'/ the socially determined and accepted norm of procedure. It means that the language used in certain social contexts is governed by this order of discourse. An example of this could be the way communication is governed by cultural norms in particular societies. In some Arabic cultures for example, a married female is not permitted to make eye contact, greet, or even speak to a male that is not her spouse. Any interaction, regardless of the purpose, is therefore governed by this non-linguistic norm which is practiced in this culture.

Understanding this view of language as a social practice is crucial to my research, because it highlights the integral, inter-relationship between language and society. In viewing language as a social practice we take a step toward understanding how language carries much importance and could be used to exercise power within any given social context. With language being a social practice we understand that it is an integral part of society that is governed by forces internal to any given social

context, as well as being conditioned by the order of discourse/ socially accepted norms and language use in such social contexts.

In viewing language as a social practice, I am also drawing on more recent work in critical applied and sociolinguistics by Heller (2007) in particular who argues that language is connected to, but distinct from society and culture. Through this view language is perceived as one form of social practice. In studying language as a social practice we are given the lens through which to view and analyze language, and the way in which it is linked to social culture, social structure and social action. I continue this discussion later, as I offer my reasoning for viewing an individual's language ability as a process of selection from a linguistic repertoire .

## Context in CDA

An important critique of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is offered by Blommaert (2005) who argues that despite the foregrounding of context in understanding texts advocated in the approach, contexts are often taken as given rather than carefully researched. Blommaert (2005) agrees with Fairclough that there is a crucial relationship between discourse and society, and this should be recognised as important. We can see this when he writes that 'critical trends in discourse analysis emphasize the connection between discourse and social structure' (Blommaert 2005:39). A good example of this would be to analyse a teacher – student conversation. The fact that one participant *is* a teacher, and the other *is* a student, and that this interaction takes place within an institutional (school) environment shapes the power relationship that is at play within the interaction. There is an expected hierarchical power relation that occurs in the student-teacher relationship. However, this could be very different when one researches and attempts to understand a particular classroom and school context. A student could be involved in gangsterism, and for this reason instil fear into a teacher which could likely affect the power relations between the student and the teacher . A signifier of this could be enacted in their communication. This is the reason why Blommaert (2005) argues for us to examine each context in particular, rather than as a researcher assuming the context in which an interaction takes place. Context should not simply be 'read off' a text.

Blommaert (2005) offers four guidelines that are important when considering context in CDA. The first guideline is one he states as being 'self-evident' (Blommaert, 2005), that we cannot do without context. With this he argues that context must be fully understood for meaning in interaction to be understood. We cannot do without context because this is what gives the interaction meaning. To help make sense of this he uses the work of Gumperz (1982) and the notion of 'contextualisation'. Contextualisation is defined as the context which makes the particular text relevant in that setting. Thinking back to the student - teacher example described earlier, we can see how any conversation between a teacher and a gang-affiliated student can be shaped and affected by the setting. Does the interaction take place in the principal's office, with the student facing expulsion? Is the teacher caught between a conversation among rival gang members? The interaction therefore is given meaning within the context in which it appears. Secondly, he states that contextualisation and context have a dialogical relationship. This means that it is never the speaker alone who contextualises an interaction, but other parties involved in the communication as well. The context is a large determiner in the 'uptake' (Blommaert, 2005) or interpretation of the interaction. Next Blommaert (2005) writes that it is important we do not restrict the notion of context to a particular communicative event. My understanding of this is that the context of an interaction is not only particular to that interaction but it gets its meaning from similar interactions in similar contexts over time. One might think about this as an archive of interactions across time, that give context to a particular interaction happening in the present. Lastly, Blommaert (2005) argues that we should be aware of the danger of ethnocentrism. We should always be aware of the fact that contexts vary, always. It cannot be said that one context can be exactly the same as the next. Contexts are different, and if we claim to be considering context in our analysis of interactions, we will need to pay attention to the specific context in which we are investigating. Now that I have explained the view of language that forms the foundation of this research, I will consider ideas on the relationship between language and power.

## Bourdieu: Language and Power

Bourdieu (1977) introduced the metaphor of the linguistic marketplace and the idea of the 'economics of linguistic exchange'. His theory builds on the work of Saussure, who divided language into two key components, *langue* and *parole*, or better understood using the terms of Chomsky (1981) as competence and performance. Bourdieu seeks to investigate what the sociological effects of these concepts are. He argues that discourse must fulfil certain criteria for it to hold certain power. It must: be uttered by a legitimate speaker (by the appropriate person as opposed to an imposter); it must be uttered in a legitimate context; it must be addressed to legitimate receivers; and it must follow the legitimate phonological (sound) and syntactic (grammatical structure) forms. This shows that for language to hold any power within a certain context, it must be spoken by the right person, at the right time, to the right people as well as follow the appropriate rules that govern the particular variety of that language. So for power to be conveyed through language these prerequisites have to be met. It is easy to see then how Bourdieu's analogy of the marketplace is such an appropriate one. He argues that 'language should be viewed as a symbolic asset which can receive different values, depending on the market in which it is offered.' (1977: 651). The linguistic competence that an individual has, therefore can become linguistic capital if it is used in the correct market, at the correct time. Bourdieu sheds light on how the educational system becomes a crucial player in the struggle around 'legitimate language' use because it has a 'monopoly' over the production of language, and what is to be deemed as linguistic competence, or 'legitimate language'.

Bourdieu discusses the way in which the reproduction of social inequality is facilitated through language use. We can see this when he writes that 'a language is worth what those who speak it are worth' (Bourdieu, 1977: 652). This enables us to realise that the language and the individual have a bidirectional relationship: the language empowers the individual, and the individual can add more credibility and power to the language. This is made more evident when he writes that 'What speaks is not the utterance, the language, but the whole social person' (Bourdieu,

1977: 652). It is important also to note that not every individual's capital has value in particular contexts. For the individual to have credibility and power they must be able to prove capital in context.

Bourdieu adds that, 'When one language dominates the market, it becomes the norm against which the other modes of expression, and with them the values of other various competencies, are defined' (Bourdieu, 1977:652). So therefore when a particular language is more valued in a particular context it affects the value of other languages, or forms of expression that are present in the same social context. The social value of these can then also only be defined by their effect on the market, and relationship to the market. The profit that is gained within this market place is the profit of distinctiveness. This becomes one of the gains for the speakers of the legitimate language in question.

McKinney (2007) makes reference to the way in which a particular register of English, White South African English (WSAE) has become viewed as the legitimate language in South African suburban schooling contexts, and the sole variety of English that carries status in these contexts. We can see this when McKinney writes, 'the Black South African variety of English [BSAE]… is seen as a variety that deviates from the norm, and is not acceptable in formal contexts' (2007:9). This reveals that the BSAE register was not recognised in formal suburban schooling contexts at all, and that all power was given to those who spoke the WSAE variety. WSAE therefore had a greater chance of gain for its speakers in the marketplace of the school.

Bourdieu writes that 'a speaker's linguistic strategies are oriented by the chances of profit for the particular speaker, occupying a particular position in the structure of the distribution of capital' (Bourdieu, 1977:654). So the speaker would choose to say things in a certain way to achieve a certain result, a result which would increase his/her capital, and therefore, power/ status. We could even go as far as to argue that the access to the prestige variety of English is extremely limited, in addition, it can come at a great cost for the individuals who attempt to access it. Bourdieu (1977) argues that access to the prestige language is controlled by those who speak it. So of course for them to provide access, it would come at a price. This could be why people choose to identify with an antilanguage (Stone, 1995).

Antilanguages are born from the anti-society who choose to deviate from the norm. The reasons for this deviation could be attributed to the difficulty in access to the

'prestige' language. Gangsterism is a good example of this. The lack of access to social goods and resources available to the individual causes the antilanguages and anti-society to look more appealing. This is made evident when Bourdieu writes that 'the dominant usage is the usage of the dominant class, the one which presupposes appropriation of the means of acquisition which that class monopolises' (Bourdieu, 1977:659). This shows us that even though it is possible to acquire these usages, i.e. use of the legitimate language, it will be on the terms of the ones who control it.

Bourdieu's (1977) work has been critiqued by Heller (2007) who adds a certain modernity to the notion of the linguistic market place. Heller (2007) argues that the marketplace is not necessarily unified, or homogenous within a certain context, and that cultural capital carries different weight within different marketplaces. So the argument here is that there are multiple marketplaces in which an individual's capital can bring benefit, especially in diverse and multilingual societies. McKinney (2007) also points to the presence of 'sub-cultural' capital within the language practices of youth attending desegregated suburban schools. This idea was born from looking at a body of research done by Kapp (2004) and Rudwick (2004) which revealed an ambivalence toward English, and a valuing of African languages by youths in Cape Town and Kwazulu Natal respectively. This showed that the sub-cultural capital gained and valued by young people in desegregated suburban schools who used African languages among peers rather than English, was used as a method of exclusion from those who were not considered to be 'cool' (McKinney, 2007).

We can clearly see how the work of Bourdieu, in addition to the work of Fairclough, sets us in good stead to better understand the power relations within the informal school community with regards to the use of a language resource such as *sabela*. Bourdieu's idea of the linguistic market place allows us to visualise the power struggles and the reasons why power could be ascribed to certain people, in relation to their language use. 'Symbolic power' is given to an individual who speaks the right words, at the right time, to the right person, in the right way (this includes phonological features, prosody and syntax). Understanding the bidirectional relationship between the individual and the language gives us a deeper insight into the possibility that this power could grow as interactions continue. This would be

interactions where a certain individual is given the opportunity to display that power.

Fairclough (2001) also gives us an account of language and power. He begins by identifying two components in the discourse/ power relationship: power in discourse; and power behind discourse. Fairclough writes that power in discourse is to do with 'powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants' (Fairclough, 2001: 46). Constraints are put on: contents (what is said or done); relations (social relations that people enter in discourse); and subjects (subject positions that people can occupy). Here Fairclough offers terms to describe the kinds of constraints that a dominant participant could put on a non-powerful participant. Being able to distinguish between these would be important when analysing different situations.

The work of Bourdieu and Fairclough serve as strong foundations for and capable engines to drive this research. The work of Fairclough forms a strong foundation to view language as a social practice, arguing that language is an integral part of society. It allows us to understand the relationship that language has within, or as part of, society and therefore the effects that it could have on social relations. In addition, Fairclough offers a framework by which the constraints placed on non-powerful participants in an encounter with powerful participants can be identified and categorised. The work of Bourdieu allows for greater understanding of the relationship between language use and power, and through understanding this relationship, one can better explain the way in which power relations constructed through language use occur in the field.

The relationship between language and power is also central in the field of language ideologies (Makoe and McKinney, 2014). Makoe and McKinney expand on the idea of language ideologies by describing these as a ‘set of beliefs, values and frames that continually circulate in society, informing the ways in which language is conceptualised, and how it is used’ (Makoe and McKinney, 2014:3). This explains to us how languages ideologies impact on different aspects of society, and more importantly the influence they have on the production and reception of language in society. They draw on the work of Foucault (1980) to argue that that language ideologies are constructed through discourse, which is different systems of power and knowledge. It is important, when understanding the power relations within

language use, to be aware of the ideologies or social beliefs that influence its production and interpretation.

## Language practices and youth in multilingual contexts

Having reviewed the relationship between language and power, I will now consider research with a focus on the language practices of youth in multicultural and urban spaces.

Rampton (2011) has carried out a number of studies on ‘styling’ and ‘crossing’ among young people in multi-ethnic urban communities in the UK (particularly London and Birmingham). He looked at hybrid languages spoken among these youth and argued that we can begin to identify them as ‘Contemporary urban vernaculars’ (Rampton, 2011). Hybrid languages are defined by Rampton as the use of features from a number of different languages, registers and varieties. He argued that the speaking of these languages created a ‘peer group familiarity’ (2011:287) among the speakers and created a sense of camaraderie among them. Rampton’s findings led him to the naming of this mixed speech. The word ‘vernacular’ was chosen because it ‘gives fuller recognition to the non-standardness and lower-class associations’ (Rampton, 2011:290). The word ‘vernacular also suggests that there is a ‘collective durability’ (Rampton, 2011:290) of this language. Rampton also argues that the phrase ‘contemporary urban’ signifies that it is inclusive of all, as the term urban already suggests a certain degree of multi-ethnicity.

Closer to home, Kerfoot's (2013) study of the language use of primary school learners in a township created post-apartheid in Cape Town relates strongly to this research. This is evident when Kerfoot (2013) writes that children in the school come from two historically disadvantaged and segregated groups, ‘coloured’ and ‘black African’ (2013:1). Kerfoot writes that the purpose of her study was to 'illuminate encounters across difference and in particular the sudden glimpses of wider social and political ideologies that pulse through them' (2013:2). Through the interactions of learners, Kerfoot was able to identify multiple social and political discourses which influenced the production and interpretation within interaction. Kerfoot (2013) argues that in such multicultural, multilingual contexts there exists a

'heightened awareness of ways of speaking' and continuous need to 'negotiate social roles' (2013:8). One way in which these social roles are negotiated is through the mobilisation of the linguistic resources which are available to speakers. By strategically using the different linguistic resources available to them as part of their linguistic repertoire they can negotiate the social roles and relationships in any given context.

Empirical studies that have been conducted over the past two decades have looked at changing language practices in contexts of diversity. This is made evident by Blommaert and Rampton (2012:1) when they write, 'There is a growing awareness that over the past two decades, globalization has altered the face of social, cultural and linguistic diversity in societies'. The intense migration in urban spaces and the birth of multicultural communities has given birth to what Vertovec (2007) calls 'Super - diversities'. This is also true all over the world, and more so among youths in urban spaces. From this research terms such as language crossing (Rampton, 1995), and translanguaging (Rampton, 2011; Li Wei, 2011) were coined and have given a greater insight into language practices in these urban spaces.

The notion of language crossing was first initiated by Rampton (1995) in his study of youths and their communicative practices in a neighbourhood in the United Kingdom. Rampton views language crossing as an individual's use of the resources of a language of which they are not seen as legitimate speakers. The individuals would switch to a language variety that does not 'belong' to them. Rampton (2011) writes of translanguaging that it is mainly concerned with the individual's ability to create meaning through the full range of linguistic resources which are available to them. Translanguaging, according to Li Wei (2011) creates a social space for the multilingual user by combining different aspects of their lives such as personal histories, experience, environment, beliefs and ideologies. The different elements within an individual's linguistic repertoire are therefore a culmination of all the above mentioned aspects, and therefore this influences their languaging in social spaces. For this reason I have strongly identified with the notion of translanguaging and the linguistic repertoire.

For the purpose of this research I will define the language style of *sabela* as part of an individual's 'linguistic repertoire' as defined by Blommaert and Backus (2011). The term repertoire refers to 'all' of the linguistic resources an individual can call

upon in interaction i.e. dialects, languages, registers, gestures. The notion of repertoire implies that for an individual to add a semiotic resource to his/ her repertoire they need to have a degree of communicative competence in it. Importantly also, a linguistic repertoire belongs to a particular speech community. By this definition *sabela* can be defined as part of an individual's linguistic repertoire. Blommaert and Backus (2011) also write that these repertoires characterise certain speech communities that share the repertoire, because this guarantees smooth communication. Busch (2012) offers good insight into the history and uses of the notion of linguistic repertoire. Coined by Gumperz (1964) the idea of linguistic repertoire refers to 'all accepted ways of formulating messages' (Gumperz, 1964: 138 in Busch, 2012:2). An individual's linguistic repertoire can be seen as a traveling suitcase, in which all ways of speaking are stored and ready to be used in different situations depending on the meaning the speaker wishes to convey. The individual's use of resources in their repertoire is dictated by social constraints, and the individual carries the power to decide when and where to draw on different elements within his/ her repertoire.

## Performing identity through language use

As my research is based on discovering how *sabela* functions within an individual's linguistic repertoire, I have decided to use two concepts in my analysis of data that will assist me in showing how the individual's languaging helps them achieve their desired outcomes. These concepts are performativity (Butler, 1990) and footing (Goffman, 1981).

Butler's notion of performativity was born from her theorizing of gender and identity. She argues that '…gender proves to be performative- that is constituting the identity it is purported to be in this sense gender is always a doing' (Butler 1990; 28). Through this definition of performativity we understand gender as an ongoing series of social and cultural performances rather than as an expression of one's prior identity. Performativity therefore describes ways in which the individual 'performs' a role and an identity. Butler writes that 'Gender is a repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts with a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time and produce the appearance of substance'. (Butler 1990; 35). According

to Butler, the repetition of the gender performance that is structured in a certain way, allows individuals to be viewed as part of a particular gender, and have a certain identity. This particular understanding of gender and identity, has been adapted by Pennycook (2004) to aid the way in which we understand language use and identity.

Pennycook argues that this understanding of the notion of performativity offers three main implications for alternative understandings of language. Firstly, it opens up a new way of thinking about language use and identity. Secondly, it offers ways of understanding how subjectivities are built into the understanding and reception of an individual's being. Lastly, it opens up ways of thinking about language performance in relation to other modes of performance such as ritual, music and dance. Marrying the notion of performativity with language allows us to understand how an individual could go about performing an identity, in any form, through their language practices, or languaging. For example if an individual were to speak an aristocratic, 'posh' English, mostly associated with British Royalty, people would form certain judgements and ideas about them, possibly fictitiously mapping out their entire lives and their heritage.

A second concept I will be using in my data analysis is the concept of footing (Goffman, 1981). In his analysis of Gumperz's work, Goffman (1981) re-evaluated and built on aspects that Gumperz had mentioned in his research. In his observations and analysis of conversations, Gumperz often found that people were engaged in 'code-switching-like behaviour that doesn't involve a code switch at all' (Goffman 1981; 127). Here he is referring to an individual's ability to change stance or alignment in conversation. This is a phenomenon that would be coined by Goffman (1981) as footing. Footing can be defined as an individual's 'alignment, or set, or stance or posture, or protected self' in conversation and utterance (Goffman, 1981; 128). In conversation then, an individual can change footing to portray a certain self, a particular set of beliefs and values, and also a distinct identity position. Further, Goffman writes that a 'change in footing implies a change in alignment we take up to ourselves and others present as expressed in the ways we manage the production or reception of an utterance' (Goffman, 1981; 128). The power to change the production and reception of what is being said therefore lies with the individual, and the ability they have to project a 'self' that would be

received by the intended audience in a certain way, therefore allowing the speaker to reach whichever intended goal. Communication however, is a two way street.

Though the power does lie with the speaker to change footing in the intended way for the intended purpose, it still involves an intricate understanding from the audience. The conversational paradigm involves the 'speaker' and the 'hearer' (Goffman, 1981;144). Hearers can be found in conversational and social platforms and in all cases the hearers must be hearing something that is within their field of reference to be affected by what they are receiving. This relates to Blommaert's (2005) notion of 'uptake' as earlier discussed. The contexualisation of an interaction affects the interpretation and meaning making. The interaction can also be shaped by the power relations that differ in various contexts. Speakers therefore have the ability to tap into the various fields of reference held by the hearer, by choosing from the different linguistic resources they have at their disposal.

The notion of footing will be used to analyse how learners in the research site make use of different linguistic resources to achieve certain goals through conversation that can change moment-by-moment. Footing (Goffman, 1981) and performativity (Butler,1990) together allow for an analysis of conversation which hones in on the identity the individual wishes to perform through their languaging.

## Conclusion

This chapter has moved from a broad discussion of language as a social practice to reviewing how language and power have a bidirectional relationship. I have also looked at ways in which language is used among youths in urban spaces around the world, and how this language use allows individual's to perform certain identities and achieve particular outcomes through performativity (Butler, 1990, Pennycook, 2004) and changes of footing (Goffman, 1981) in their language use.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

Having outlined my research aim and research question in chapter 1, and the theoretical framework on which my study is based in chapter 2, I now turn to a discussion of my research methodology. I begin by outlining my chosen approach, Linguistic Ethnography. I then discuss the research site and participants as well as data collection and analysis strategies and end with a consideration of ethical issues.

My research design was based on Linguistic Ethnography (LE). Rampton (2004) gives us a clear description of the orientation of LE when he writes:

> *'Linguistic ethnography generally holds that language and social life are mutually shaping, and that close analysis of situated language use can provide fundamental and distinctive insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity.'*
>
> (Rampton, 2004:2)

From the outset we can understand the importance of basing this research within the field of LE. It clearly aligns itself toward recognising the importance of society and its effect on the interactions between people in a community.

Ethnography is a methodology which attempts to investigate and describe how the behaviour of an individual or group of people is affected by the cultures or subcultures in which they find themselves (Draper, 2015). It involves studying interactions within their given contexts and in doing this seeks to improve our understanding of 'the real world' (Serrant-Green, 2007). Through studying these behaviours in their given contexts, we also attempt to uncover the perspectives of those who are being studied (Hammersley, 2005). By approaching research with this methodology we are able to understand how and why things happen in their real world contexts, and begin to understand the perspectives of those who find themselves involved in these contexts on a constant basis. Draper (2015) explains that human beings understand the world through an intricately woven web of meaning that includes rituals, symbols and languages among others.

Creese (2008) writes that to fully understand what the field of LE holds, we need to see it as a marriage of the terms 'linguistic' and 'ethnography'. She writes that ethnography can benefit from the detailed analytical frameworks provided by linguistics, while linguistics can benefit from the process of reflexive sensitivity required in ethnography. Ethnography offers linguistics the tools for a closer reading of context, which is not often present during linguistic analysis. Linguistics then offers a close analysis of the language use which is not typical of participant observation and the simple taking of field notes in an ethnographic study. Kerfoot (2013) writes that LE, 'emphasises the importance of speakers' and listeners' perspectives on what they are doing with semiotic resources such as glances, words, intonation, codeswitches' (2013:5). This will be best achieved through linguistic analysis, looking at what is being said and using aspects of discourse analysis to uncover meanings that are being conveyed, as well as discussions with participants about their language use.

Using LE has offered deeper insight into interactions by enabling me to consult the speaker's and listener's for their perspective on my interpretation.

By situating my research in the field of linguistic ethnography I have therefore had the ability to use the strongest characteristics of linguistic micro-analysis, and ethnography. I was able to collect naturally occurring data from two boys who were selected as able participants for my research. This lead to interviews held with the participants as well as my expert informant to assist in uncovering perspectives of those who find themselves in the context that was to be studied. I was also able to pay attention to the use of language, while paying important attention to context, and most importantly the relationship between the two. This addresses Blommaert's concern regarding the need for the consideration of context in critical discourse analysis. Furthermore, Creese (2008) quoting Rampton et al (2004) writes that the field of LE is shaped by ongoing debates in different fields. Importantly, one of these fields is the work done on local literacies and the view of the text as a socially produced phenomenon. This research has attempted to add to this body of knowledge by looking at how power relations are produced through informal language usage in a Western Cape School.

## Data Collection & Participants

I chose to collect data at the school at which I was teaching during 2012. I made the decision to collect data from the school at which I was myself employed rather than any other similar school for ethical reasons which I will discuss later.

I have selected three participants to assist with my research. The first two who are the main participants, carried voice recorders, and are boys (aged 16 and 17) who apparently have links to a branch of the 26 gang that operates in the surrounding area. I also made use of an expert informant (third research participant) to assist with the transcription of data and to provide his views on an individual's use of elements of *sabela* in the recorded interactions. This third research participant is a former scholar of mine, who has a good command over this languaging ability. All three participants live in close proximity to each other in a nearby neighbourhood, that is notorious for its gang activity and high crime rate. Many learners from the school come from this particular neighbourhood, however these two boys are part of a group of boys that apparently live very close to each other and carry the same affiliation to the 26 gang, which I will discuss later. I have chosen to seek the help of these boys as my research participants based on my observation of them while they conversed with others around the school. They often drew on elements of *sabela* in their informal conversations around the school, and my initial impression was that this language practice often got them what they wanted.

The main source of data collection was through audio recordings of naturally occurring interactions between the two Grade 9 boys at the school. This was collected using digital audio recorders carried by the two boys.

The research participants were asked to carry the voice recorders during interval times (2 x 25 minutes per day) for a duration of a school week (5 days). The voice recorders were given to them at the beginning of each interval and returned to me at the end. The boys were shown how to operate the recorders so that they could switch the recording on and off and could delete recordings which they did not want to share.

Once this process was completed, and I had done an initial transcription of selected interactions from the recordings, I conducted interviews with the two boys, asking

questions about their reasoning behind certain interactions and gaining more perspective into how they viewed their language use at particular times. This approach is modeled on the study conducted by Rampton (2005) investigating urban youth's use of 'crossing' as discussed earlier.

The following table explains the transcription conventions used in my data analysis:

| **Symbol** | **Purpose** |
|---|---|
| . | End of Utterance |
| ? | End of Utterance with rise in intonation |
| ! | Raised pitch and volume throughout utterance |
| ↑ | Rise in intonation |
| underline | Emphatic Phrase |
| : | Length |
| // | Overlapping Speech |
| ( . ) | Pause |
| ( ..) | Longer Pause |
| < > | Transcriber comment/ translation/ nonvocal noise |
| { } | Phonetic Translation |
| *italics* | Elements of *sabela* |
| standard | Standard English/ Afrikaans |
| CAPS | Kaaps English/ Afrikaans |
| **bold** | isiXhosa |

Table 1. Transcription Conventions

## Methods of Data Analysis

Once I had collected and transcribed the audio data, I conducted a discourse analysis of conversations where I could identify elements of *sabela* being used. My

discourse analysis paid particular attention to the immediate context of the conversation, the participants involved, the topic, turn-taking, use of linguistic repertoires, changes in footing (Goffman, 1981), and aspects of performativity (Bulter, 1990). Retrospective discussions with participants about their own interpretations and perceptions of their language use formed an additional, crucial part of my analysis. Through uncovering the perspectives of learners about what had been said, and what they had heard, I have layered my own analysis on top of the perspectives of the learners concerned. Such an approach to analysis of discourse is modelled on Rampton (2005)'s study of 'crossing' or unexpected inter-ethnic language use among urban youths in the UK.

The interviews and retrospective discussions (Rampton, 2005) that I held allowed me the opportunity to receive great insight into learners' perceptions of their own thought process and the reactions of listeners when certain learners spoke in certain ways, and more importantly how that impacted the learners who were on the receiving end of that particular language use.

The focus of my analysis was initially to identify the resources in the linguistic repertoires of the two Grade 9 boys. Following this, I explored the meaning making and language use of these learners, judgements about who is most competent in using *sabela* and language ideologies about the use of *sabela* and its speakers. I also used the interviews as an opportunity to gain some insight into the ideologies surrounding the use of *sabela*. This allowed me to understand the way people feel about *sabela* speakers, and how they feel when being '*sabela'd*' to. I wanted to ascertain who uses the language and for what purpose they use the language within informal spaces in the school context.

## Ethics

I have followed the code of Ethics set out by the School of Education at the University of the Cape Town. I have chosen to do my research with grade 9 learners who were 16 years or older so that apart from getting their guardian's consent[5], they would have a good understanding of what was required of them during the

[5] Parent/ Guardian consent letter is attached as Appendix 2

research. It also meant that I was able to conduct interviews with teenagers who are able to voice their opinions and perceptions[6]. I chose this Grade because I have found the use of *sabela* to be more common in the junior high school years.

One concern I had was that the participants in this research could possibly be seen as informants, due to the fact that they were carrying audio recorders. I have already mentioned that the language I am trying to uncover is associated with gangs and these boys do have affiliations to certain gangs, so I had to take certain measures to protect my research participants.

The participants were able to delete any recordings if asked to by anyone, and were asked to let any other learner they come into contact with know that they are carrying a recorder for research purposes. I also assured them that I would make use of pseudonyms in my thesis as not to draw any attention to them in particular.

The greatest form of control I had over their safety was the fact that I was a teacher at this school and had a strong trust relationship with these students. They knew that at any time they could withdraw from the research without any questions being asked, And if at any point they wanted their contributions to be destroyed I would do so. I was also physically present in the school and on alert for any possible negative reactions to the research. As it turned out, student conversations mainly revolved around every topics such as local tv shows, gossip from the speaker's community, the weekend or previous night's activities, and sport. It was not possible for me to tell whether recordings were deleted at any time, however there was a recording made during interval session across the five school days.

Due to the fact that I used research participants that were in a school setting I had to make sure that I was able to conduct the research by receiving permission from the Western Cape Education Department and the school principal[7]. I then also had to ensure for the safety of the research participants due to the fact that aspects of my research had links to gangsterism.

In this chapter I have discussed my research design, data collection and analysis strategies, as well as the ethical considerations that were crucial to the undertaking of my research. In the following chapter I will present my data analysis.

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[6] Student's letter of consent is attached as Appendix 3

[7] Principal Approval Letter attached as Appendix 1

# Chapter 4: Power Playground

In this chapter I present my analysis of interactional data and my interpretations of the use of *sabela* in the boys linguistic repertoires. There are many contexts that affect the way languaging takes place within the informal school environment. Before I present my analysis of the interactional data in this chapter I will discuss the context of the school at which the data was collected, as well as provide a more detailed description of my research participants and the language infrastructure of the school.

## Context of School

The school at which the research was conducted was, at the time, situated in a middle class area. The school was at its temporary location, as they awaited the completion of the new school building that is situated in a working class area 2 kms away. Due to the fact that the school only had temporary residence in the middle class area, and would inevitably move to the nearby working class community, the school only catered for children from feeder schools that were situated in the working class area and surrounds.

The learners who attend the school predominantly come from three surrounding poverty stricken areas. These places are characterized as communities where houses are small (mostly 1 bedroomed homes), income is low, gangsterism and drug related activity are high. Many of the learners come from very low-income families; evidence of this can be seen by the high numbers of students who participate in the school's feeding scheme which offers breakfast and lunch. Many learners revealed that these meals are sometimes the only meals they have for the day.

Poverty stricken areas in the Western Cape are rife with gangsterism and drugs, which have become a means of escape and source of ritual for many of the residents, and mostly youths (Pinnock, 2016). And so too with the areas that these

students come from. Young people are exposed to gangs and gang related activity on a daily basis, and discussions about the previous evenings criminal activities that occurred in the area is regular chatter among the students each morning.

The school receives counselling support from a local Non Government Organization (NGO). Counselling is offered to gang members, drug users, drug addicts, and learners with anger management problems. This counselling sometimes alters behaviour at school, but it has become clear that in many cases turning to gangsterism and drugs has in some way become a necessary survival technique and coping strategy for the youngsters involved.

The boys who are participants in my research identify with the 26 gang, one of the Number Gangs. Schurink (1989) explains that the Number Gangs are primarily distinguished by their specified goals and hours of operation. The 26's symbol is a sunrise, indexing the fact that their preferred hours of operation are during daytime. They are not allowed to take blood or operate at night unless this is in self defence. Schurink further explains that the designated goal for the 26 gang is to rob through cunning, guile and deceit, *'overpower met gedagte* [Overpower with the mind/ thought] (Schurink, 1989:11). The gangs are run in a quasi-military style, with all members having certain ranks which detail the specific role they carry within the camp.

## Research Participants

**Moloto** (17) is a boy in Grade 9. He is popular among learners and teachers for his charming demeanor and his propensity for neatness and punctuality. He seems to be involved in gangs as he is well schooled in the implicit gestures and meanings involved with being a gangster. In a conversation prior to the commencement of this research he referred to the second participant, Smiley, as a *skibenga.* This according to my understanding is a term that refers to someone who wants to be more than they claim to be. Making these claims about another possible gang member shows that he possibly carries a rank higher than the second participant, Smiley.

**Smiley** (16), also in Grade 9, is the main reason for me conducting this research. I have noticed that he converses using elements of *sabela* often around the school. However, I had a sense that he was not completely immersed into the culture of gangsterism and seemed only to be using this as a means of being noticed and being involved. Smiley is popular among the students at the school, but is often subject to the scorn of teachers due to his lack of punctuality, unkempt appearance, frequent disobeying of school rules, and often uncontrollable behavior in the classroom.

The third participant in my data is an expert informant I have sought help from. His primary purpose was to assist in translating and helping me to understand the use of *sabela* in the interactions I have recorded, but as time passed and discussions took place he became an important part in not only translating and interpreting the words, but also in understanding the world that impacts the languaging I was attempting to study. He is an ex-matriculant from the same school and comes from the same neighbourhood. By the time I had reached out to him he had found stable employment and had turned his back on what could have been a life of crime. During his school years he was involved with gangs. According to him though, he only ever found himself on the peripheries and could never muster up the courage to 'formally' join one of the gangs in the area he lived. The few years he had spent on the outer edge of gang life have given him insights and an understanding of that world, which has become invaluable to my understanding of how that world works.

# Presentation of Data

## Language Infrastructure

The school at which the research was conducted is a dual medium English and Afrikaans school. This means that the language of learning and teaching is either English or Afrikaans depending on whether learners are in the English stream or the Afrikaans stream. The majority of the learners at the school have been enrolled into the Afrikaans Medium stream which sees Afrikaans taught as a Home Language (known as 'Huistaal' in Afrikaans), an elite 'standard' variety that is not the variety of Afrikaans learners would use at home, and English taught as the First Additional

Language. For the majority of those learners enrolled into the English stream, English is not their home language. It is their second or even third language after Afrikaans and isiXhosa. This alone gives us some insight into the range of resources making up the linguistic repertoire (Busch, 2012) that is available to these students. The school caters for African and coloured learners. At the time 21% of the learners at the school were classified as being African (CEMIS, 2014).

The origin of the the notion of linguistic repertoire was born from the work of Gumperz (1964) who initially termed it as the 'verbal repertoire'. Gumperz linked the notion to a particular speech community and defined it as 'contain[ing] all the accepted ways of formulating messages. It provides the weapons of everyday communication. Speakers choose among this arsenal in accordance with the meanings they wish to convey' (Gumperz 1964:138). The linguistic repertoire that is held by learners within the school is eclectic, because the world they are surrounded by is eclectic. Within the school setting it is customary to witness learners from an Afrikaans medium class call on elements of English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, and mostly the Cape Colloquial talk, a local variety of the Cape Flats often called Kaaps, which contains elements of English, Afrikaans and some slang terms (McCormick, 2002) from their linguistic repertoire. Both Smiley and Moloto are in the Afrikaans Huistaal (Home Language) class, and therefore learn English as their First Additional Language.

## The boys' linguistic repertoires

Evidence of the different resources in the boys' linguistic repertoires can be seen in the following interactions:

### Interaction 1

Smiley is on the playground with a friend, and he is told by an isiXhosa speaking boy that a teacher is approaching:

1.Boy 1: Ek gaan hulle moer hulle GA my niks MAAKIE (I'll hurt them they can do nothing to me)

2.Smiley: Mmm [Agreement]

3.African Boy: Samuels!! [shouting]

4.Smiley: I see BRA, **Enkosi** (I see my friend/ brother, thanks) [high five hand gesture]

The above interaction sees Smiley conversing with a friend. They might be doing something wrong or be in a prohibited part of the school grounds because a second boy comes toward them to warn them of a teacher (Ms. Samuels) approaching. We can also see the different resources drawn from Smiley's repertoire as he navigates through this interaction. In turn 1 the boy speaks to Smiley in a mixture of Afrikaans and Cape Colloquial slang. 'Ek gaan' is considered to be standard Afrikaans and can be translated to 'I will'. The words 'ga' (shortened version of 'gaan'[will]) and 'maakie' (shortened form of 'maak nie' [do nothing]) is considered Cape Colloquial languaging. We know he understood what was being said to him because he utters a form of agreement (turn 2). From the accent of the boy speaking in turn 3 I can tell that he is isiXhosa speaking, and thus likely to be in the English stream of the school. Smiley clearly notices this and answers the boy in English (I see), and Cape Colloquial talk (bra [friend/ brother]), crosses to isiXhosa (Enkosi [Thank You], and gesture (high five of thanks). This shows the complex repertoire available to Smiley which includes a wide range of resources. He assembles a number of semiotic resources in this short interaction, and negotiates meaning between himself and both boys.

Rampton's (2011) notion of contemporary urban vernaculars, as discussed in Chapter 2, also mentions how the fusing of resources allow speakers to negotiate meaning in different ways. Considering the above interaction it could be argued that

Smiley is not really aware of the different resources he is employing to create meaning in the interaction. The use of these resources has perhaps become the nature of his communicative patterns. This ability to negotiate by drawing on linguistic resources forms the foundation of my research.

Interaction 2 below, shows the linguistic resources that Moloto has at his disposal:

## Interaction 2

Moloto walks through the school playground. He leaves a group of friends and walks toward a girl that it seems he knows, and would really like to talk to.

1.Moloto: Hoekom hardloop jy weg? DAI is mos *pangela*. [.] *Hosh* Eddy [.] You! [Why are you running away? That is really rude (.) Hi Eddy (.)]

2.Girl: VOETSEK (Go away)

3.Moloto: YOR! I was about to greet you, you say VOETSEK. Now VOETSEK there I greet you back.

In Turn 1 Moloto is discussing an altercation from the previous day with a friend. He addresses his friend in Afrikaans ('Hoekom hardloop jy weg. Dai is mos') with elements of *sabela* (pangela, hosh) and later crosses to English when he spots a girl he wishes to greet (You!). The girl replies with an offensive and dismissive Kaaps term, Voetsek (Go Away)(Turn 2). In turn 3 Moloto continues to converse in English as he explains to the girl that all he really wanted to do was greet her, but her rudeness has prompted him to be dismissive toward her too. He proceeds to utter the same dismissive term in reply to her. This shows how Moloto makes use of the different linguistic resources available to him as he moves through the school playground and through different scenarios which require different languaging. He switches between varieties of Afrikaans and English, dominant languages within the

Western Cape, and draws on elements of *sabela* from his linguistic repertoire as he converses firstly with a friend, and then with a girl he wishes to speak to. I presented the above interactions to show evidence of the different resources available in the participants' linguistic repertoires. I will go on to discuss these interactions again to explore how these resources allow the speakers to influence the outcomes of conversations.

## Smiley and Moloto's use of *sabela*

Smiley and Moloto's use of language on the school playground shows an intricate understanding of the linguistic market places (Bourdieu, 1977) that exist in that setting. Subtle changes in footing (Goffman, 1981) and performing (Butler, 1990) a certain role, allows these boys to influence the outcomes of short interactions that take place on any given school day. The boys often make use of elements of *sabela,* described in Chapter 1 as the register associated with prison gangs. In my analysis of the boys' interactions, I will show how when elements of *sabela* are used in a legitimate context, by legitimate speakers this language use allows the speaker to portray a powerful self-image. In the same breath, my data shows that the use of *sabela* does not hold value in every linguistic marketplace that exists within the school playground. I will be analysing how the participants draw on elements of *sabela,* and I am interested in analysing the function of *sabela* in their linguistic repertoire.

Through changes in footing (Goffman, 1981) and the ability to perform identities (Butler, 1990) the participants have the ability to seamlessly shift between different linguistic resources available in their repertoire, as they attempt to assert their power. I will be looking at interactions in which power needs to be asserted for the boys to reach a particular goal, what/ who makes these contexts legitimate, and how this power is ascribed or achieved.

The ability to perform the required identities is integral to how one is perceived by those watching. In the following interaction, Smiley, Moloto and their friends are walking through the school grounds. It seems that they are exaggerating a lot and choosing repeatedly to shout the same single word for a period of 3 minutes as they approach different groups of people.

**Interaction 3**

*[Smiley walking through playground singing]*

1. Smiley, Moloto and friends: *Phakamisa, Phakamisa,* {pəkəmisə} [8][repeatedly]

2. Girl: //Nee wag

3. Smiley: *Phakamisa* jy[ to the girl] *Phakamisa* boys, Phakamisa

4. Boy 1: AWEH Smiley, wat *dala* jy (Hey Smiley, what are you up to?)

*[Smiley greeting boys in the group]*

5.Smiley: *Whey Phakamisa*

Smiley and Moloto explained that their use of the word 'phakamisa', which directly translated from isiXhosa means to 'lift up', is used as an announcement of their presence or a greeting. According to my informant this is a greeting commonly used in s*abela*, which refers to the recipients need to 'lift up their number/ flag'. Upon hearing these words a gangster would need to lift their flag or number (through hand signals or tattoos), which shows their allegiance to one of the number gangs (Schurink, 1989; Steinberg, 2001). It seems though that among the youths, who have only picked up elements of *sabela*, this meaning has been watered down, and

[8] According to International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). IPA symbols are attached in the appendix

somewhat changed into a simple greeting. My informant too was unaware that the word has isiXhosa origins, and was surprised to find that the translation fits so perfectly to its current purpose in *sabela*. Moloto and Smiley walk around the school , repeating Phakamisa, thus announcing to the rest of the learners (and teachers) that they are present. This is a possible mechanism used to instil fear in those they come across, so that people know they need to be on their toes, and be ready for anything. The use of the greeting 'phakamisa' can be seen as potentially powerful as it has been used by gangsters that have been around for centuries within the prisons, and reeked havoc in communities for decades. Smiley and Moloto can thus index their affiliation to the numbers gang through the use of the word 'phakamisa'. Personal observations lead me to believe that even though this term is not used by those who do not speak *sabela*, it is a well-known fact that this term is associated with gangsters, and often points toward their presence within a setting.

Whether Smiley and Moloto's greeting is a real reflection of their daily language practices or a performance they have chosen to perform for the researcher, knowing that they are being audio-recorded, there is still evidence here that they feel they have some sort of power to exert through their language use. This open call for others to also 'stand up/ lift up' and, either join them or stand against them, is a marker of the power they feel they possess. This performance becomes a way for them to assert their belonging to a certain group or identity. Butler (1990) writes of performativity that it is through a series of social and cultural performances that we construct our identities on an ongoing basis. The use of the 'phakamisa' greeting becomes a signifier of the boys' identity as they identify with a certain camp. They must 'perform' this ritual to show allegiance to their gang/faction/clique and to announce their presence.

Butler (1990) also writes of how important repetition is to the forming of a particular identity. The argument is that a particular set of actions done repeatedly in a particular way will solidify and 'produce the appearance of substance' (Butler 1990:33). The above interaction shows the group of boys repeating the same word, shouting it, spreading it, revealing it, and in this repetition allowing a particular identity position to set. They allow the words to fall repeatedly on the ears of the listeners so that they can produce the appearance of substance. Through their languaging they assert that they must be taken seriously.

When considering the isiXhosa word they are repeating, *Phakamisa,* and the translation there of, which is to 'stand up/ lift up', it is beneficial to consider the work of Austin (1962) and his notion of Performative Speech Acts. Austin distinguished between 'constatives' and 'performatives' (Pennycook, 2004:9). The first describes the state of affairs, something that could be considered true or false, whilst the latter accomplishes something in its enunciation. According to Austin (1962) the significance of performatives is that they are not bound by truth conditions, and their success is dependent on contextual factors, such as following the correct procedures, the legitimate words uttered by the legitimate speakers, in the correct linguistic market place, and the whole must have the desired effect. When we consider the utterance 'Phakamisa' to be a performative we can see how important this act really is to what the boys are attempting to portray. They are presenting themselves to those around them as gangsters, people with power, their words clothed in decades of infamous activity that has been threatening communities on the Cape Flats.

The idea of portraying oneself in a particular way is also shared by Goffman (1981) and his concept of footing. Following Goffman, footing refers to a

> participants projected self, which is held across a strip of behaviour (of variable duration). A change of footing implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production and reception of an utterance (1981:128).

Later, we will see how subtle changes in footing allow Smiley to reach his goals. However in this scenario (Interaction 3) we can see how the boys have chosen to select a footing which allows them to portray themselves in a powerful manner. They are displaying a 'strip of behaviour', which allows them to be perceived as commanding, and powerful.

It is interesting to notice that a girl who is caught in the midst of all they are saying, utters a jokey, ironic comment (turn 2). We can see this when she says *'Nee Wag'* (Afrikaans for 'No Wait'). From her flirtatious tone I gather that she is smiling and almost playfully asking them to stop. This is flirtatious in the sense that she wishes to attract them and their power. She asks them to stop, but this does not seem to be a serious request. In some way this could be seen as recognition of their power. This is a footing (Goffman, 1981) she has chosen. It could be argued that she

plays the timid, sheepish damsel in the hope of seeming attractive to them. Her need for their attention is evidence of her recognition of their power in this space.

Footing plays an important part in the way communication happens among the boys. In the following interaction, Smiley walks through the school playground with a boy whom he seems to know well. They are on the hunt for something to eat and are prowling the playground to find an unsuspecting victim. They spot a girl. It is unclear whether or not they know the girl by name, but it is clear that they recognize her. Interview discussions with Smiley and Moloto after I had listened to this interaction revealed that they have a certain perception of this girl: 'Sy is seker van daai plek, daar met die mooi mense' (makes hand gesture pointing to the housing complex near the school and laughs) [She's probably from that place, that place there with the beautiful people]. The use of the descriptor 'that place' suggests a distance between themselves and those 'beautiful people' which indicates their recognition of a social class difference between the girl and them. The boys describe her as being from an area near the school that has many secured housing complexes with high walls and well-kept lawns that is nothing like the much poorer neighbourhood they come from.

In the following interaction, where Smiley is again walking through the playground, he manages to negotiate different roles in his search for something to eat:

## Interaction 4

***[Smiley walking through playground with a friend]***

1.Smiley: My bru ons moet 'n *biteeza* {bajtizʌ} *chise.* {tʃajs}

<My brother we must find some food>

2.Friend: *Aweh.* <Agreement>

***(Walking and whistling]***

3.Friend: Daar is daai GOOSE met die lang kop. <there's that girl with the long head/hair>

***[Approach the girl]***

4.Smiley: Gee die *biteeza* {bajtiz∧} man, *whey*. <Give (us) is the food, hey!>

5.Girl: Nee ek het nog detensie man

<No, I still have detention>

6.Smiley: Nou WATTE *biteeza* {bajtiz∧} is daai? <So what kind of food is that?>

7.Girl: (.)Breyani

8.Smiley: *Aweh*,(.) die Go:ot *Biteeza.* {bajtiz∧} <Oh, the Good food [food]>

9.Girl: [//Nee jy kry nie (.) ek praat nie met julle nie.

<No you can't have, I don't speak to you and your friends>

(background noise)

10.Smiley: (.)Oh no, ↑please can I have a piece of food?

11.Girl: (.)Ja ok, maar net 'n klein bietjie. <Ok, just a little bit>

12.Smiley: Thank You ↑Very Much.

***[Has some food]***

13.Smiley: See you later NE ↑my girl.

14.Friend: *Salute* my bro [laughing]

In this interaction, Smiley and his friend find an unwilling victim to prey on in their search for food. They spot a girl whom it seems they are acquainted with. They refer to her as the girl with the '*lang kop'* (long head)[Turn 3], which suggests that they have previously conversed with her, or about her. She is objectified through their language and it is easy to assume that they don't care much for her. Smiley turns to his friend and they agree on a 'biteeza chise', what I would describe as a food run. Conversations with my informant revealed that the word 'chise' describes a situation where an individual is actively going out and looking to get something. Reference was made to the phrase 'chising a goose' which would refer to a male putting effort into picking up a particular female (goose) he has set his sights on. In the above interaction I consider the words 'biteeza' and 'chise' to be elements of *sabela.*

Once the boys have approached the girl they ask her to offer them something to eat. It is important to take note that Smiley uses no conventional politeness etiquette upon his approach (please, thank you, beginning with a greeting). He approaches her without greeting and, in no uncertain terms, demands that she give him some food. We can see this when he says, 'Gee die *biteeza* {bajtiz∧} man, whey' (Give the food, hey!). The girl refuses to converse with them, and tells Smiley that she does not speak to him and his friends. In Afrikaans the connotation of the word 'praat' suggests more than just conversation, it also suggests a form of association. So by saying 'Ek praat nie met julle nie' (translated literally as 'I don't't speak with you guys') the girl implies that she does not associate with Smiley and his friends.

In turn 10, Smiley then crosses (Rampton, 1995) to a Posh Cape Town English Accent, displaying politeness (please, turn 10) which bears fruit for him. As discussed in Chapter 2, Rampton coined the term crossing to describe the speaker's use of elements of a language that one does not normally use, or associate with and which are not usually part of an individual's speech. We can see this when he says, 'Oh no, please can I have a piece of food?'. The result of this crossing (Rampton, 1995) to a register he would not typically use is that the girl agrees and offers him some food. This crossing occurs to serve a particular purpose. It seems as though Smiley was unsuccessful when he approached the girl using elements of *sabela,* and thus had to perform a different identity to get what he wanted. As soon as the boys walked away, they again began to speak in a local variety of Afrikaans, with elements of *sabela.* We can see this in turn 14 when the friend says, 'Salute my bro'. Using the term 'salute' is often a *sabela* greeting and used to announce one's presence. We will see it used in a later interaction with Moloto. Here I feel it is used to show the boys' surprise at their accomplishment: they are saluting their ability to persuade the girl to share her food through their clever use of languaging. They are proud of what they have achieved, and for this they feel the need to salute each other.

This interaction shows us that the power associated with the *sabela* style is only valid in certain circles. The girl refuses to give in to the two boys when they approach her using *sabela*, but once they switch to a 'posh' variety of English she obliges. Within the marketplace (Bourdieu, 1977) they find themselves in at this moment, the legitimate language is a formal variety of English. The linguistic competence that an individual has can become linguistic capital only if it is used in the correct market, at the correct time. We can see that the currency of *sabela* does not necessarily hold much value when speaking to someone who is not a legitimate speaker of the language, or who is from a different social class position. The power that it holds within a certain interaction with legitimate speakers is voided when placed in a different context. It is clear then that there are multiple marketplaces (Heller, 2007) in the school environment and that the boys' cultural capital only holds power within certain marketplaces.

In discussion with participants Smiley and Moloto, they argued that the girl would not give in to them because she was from a particular area, a secure complex close to the school that is only available to families who are more financially secure than

most learners at the school. She is therefore not exposed to the 'gangsters' and their language practices. But for the boys to get what they wanted, 'The Good Food', they had to abide by her rules of the conversation and use the language she viewed as the legitimate language.

It is also important to note the performativity used by Smiley as he switches to the English variety. The rise in intonation at certain points in his utterance show that he was consciously performing, almost parodying, his new role, and through performing it he was perceived as a law abiding citizen, without links to drugs, gangs and violence. He had to become the person the girl could trust so that he could get what he wanted.

Smiley had to re-negotiate his social role, and draw on resources, other than the elements of *sabela* he often uses, to achieve what he wanted to. He wanted to reach his goal, and eventually does so. He makes expert use of the repertoire he possesses, crossing from *sabela* to formal standard English, knowing that it might bring him closer to his goal. There is a definite shift in footing (Goffman, 1981) as Smiley crossed to English. Smiley projects a different self as he shifts his footing according to purpose. We can see further evidence of this in interpreting interaction 1 in relation to Smiley's linguistic repertoire earlier in the chapter and reproduced below as interaction 5.

## **Interaction 5**

Smiley is on the playground with a friend, and he is told by an isiXhosa speaking boy that a teacher is approaching:

1.Boy 1: Ek gaan hulle moer hulle ga my niks maakie (I'll hurt them they can do nothing to me)

2.Smiley: Mmm [Agreement]

3.African Boy: Samuels!! [shouting]

4.Smiley: I see *BRAH*, **Enkosi** (I see my friend, thanks) [high five]

Smiley and another friend are having a conversation, much of which is unclear due to windy weather conditions interfering with the recording. When the recording becomes clear, we pick up the conversation between the boys. Smiley's friend is telling him about how he will beat up a group of boys and they won't be able to do anything to him. An isiXhosa speaking boy then comes running along to warn the boys that a teacher, Miss Samuels, is approaching. Smiley replies to the boy using elements of English (I see), Kaaps (brah [friend/ brother]), isiXhosa (Enkosi [Thank You], and gesture (high five of thanks). Much like the previous interaction, this shows how Smiley has the ability to cross between languages according to purpose. Here, he wanted to show appreciation to the boy for alerting him to the fact that a teacher was on the way toward them. He shows his appreciation toward the boy by crossing to the language of which the boy is a legitimate speaker, and a language which Smiley does not often use.

Smiley's tone when thanking the boy is more tender and peaceful than usual. This shows a change in his footing too. He projects his deep thankfulness for what this boy has done for him. On the school playground I am sure that these small mercies help students negotiate their way through the day successfully. He performs this thankfulness through his tone, his use of isiXhosa , and his gesture (high five).

Moloto also shows how he can employ different resources in his linguistic repertoire, to serve a particular purpose. His mission in the following interaction is to woo a girl that he approaches.

## Interaction 6

Moloto walks through the school playground, he leaves a group of friends and walks toward a girl that it seems he knows, and would really like to talk to.

1.Moloto: Hoekom hardloop jy weg. Dai is mos *pangela*. [.] *Hosh* Eddy [.] You!

2.Girl: VOETSEK

3.Moloto: YOR! I was about to greet you, you say VOETSEK. Now VOETSEK there I greet you back**.**

Moloto leaves a group of friends and sees a girl whom he would really like to greet. Though his greeting is not conventional (You!, Turn 1) from his reaction it appears that he was shocked at how the girl responds. The girl responds in a very dismissive manner. Voetsek, is a Kaaps word, often associated with speaking harshly to animals. One would often here the word spoken in Cape Coloured communities when people are speaking to their pets, telling them to move out of the way. The girl could have responded this way for various reasons, but it is clear that she does not feel any need to converse with Moloto.

He uses English as he explains to her that all he wanted to do was greet her, but considering how rude she was he had decided against greeting and had chosen to swear back at her instead. Moloto crosses to English, a language he would not normally converse in because he is obviously aware that this is the language which the girl considers to be legitimate and important. Much like in the above Interactions 4 and 5, to ensure clear communication with the listener, Smiley crosses to the language which holds stronger currency in that marketplace to ensure smooth communication of his intentions. This strategy is used whether to persuade someone to give him food, or convey his gratitude. The languages being crossed to hold value in these interactions but are not the languages that Smiley and Moloto readily identify with. Their ability to manipulate outcomes of conversations through their crossing and expert use of their linguistic repertoires is evidence of the control they have over the resources in these repertoires.

On another occasion when Smiley is again in search of a quick meal, he shows his command of his linguistic repertoire within the playground market place, in this case (interaction 7 below) showing how he uses the *sabela* style to full effect. He approaches a boy in the playground and is about to ask him for something to eat. By

the way he speaks to the boy it is clear that they know each other to a certain extent. According to the conversation, the boy is indebted to Smiley for some reason, and Smiley has chosen to call in that favour now.

## **Interaction 7**

***[Smiley converses with a boy who does not seem to speak Sabela]***

1.Smiley: *Aweh* Justin (Hey Justin)

2.Justin: *Aweh* (Hey)

3.Smiley: WAA die *biteza my bru?* Jy skuld my nog *hosh.* (Where's the food my man? You still owe me)

4.Justin: [Nervous giggle] Ja ok, have one slice

*[scramble and the bread falls]*

5.Smiley: Minute* {mInItɜ:} jy!! Wat dala jy? Daa val daai biteza. Môre bring jy my twee of ek dala 'n nommer (What are you doing? There the food just fell. Tomorrow I want two slices or I'll play a number [do something])

6.Justin: //[Laughs]

7.Smiley: Ek laggi*e* ↑*hosh,* maak net *daai lyn vol* more (I'm not laughing, just complete that line tomorrow[sort it out tomorrow])

8.Justin: //[Laughs in agreement]

9.Smiley: *Salute*

***[Smiley leaves]***

**Minute – the word is a frequently used term which refers to the recipient having only minutes to live*

Here we can see how Smiley uses his competence in *Sabela* to intimidate the other learner into giving him a slice of bread. Once the bread falls, Smiley goes into a frenzy and demands that the boy brings him double the amount of food the next day. The boy does not use any elements of *sabela* and it is clear that he refrains from speaking much. He keeps his contributions to a minimum, with simple laughs and giggles. His reluctance to engage points to a possible pressure or fear that is instilled in him.

In turn 3, Smiley ends his turn with the word '*hosh'*. This is a word that could be considered a performative (Austin, 1962), a word that simply reinforces Smiley's presence, his powerful aura in this interaction. He repeats this word in turn 7, when he reminds Justin that this is not a lighthearted interaction, and that every word uttered should be considered seriously. This too points to the performativity and the self which Smiley wishes to portray. He wants to project a no-nonsense, commanding presence in this setting.

The rise in intonation also presents this as a performance. Smiley chooses to place emphasis on the words which reaffirm his performance and his projected self. His footing is clear and remains constant. This is clear in turn 7 when Smiley says, 'Ek laggi*e <u>hosh</u>,* maak net *daai lyn vol* more'. (Literal translation: I am not laughing, just complete the line tomorrow). Consultation with my informant revealed that the concept of the 'lyn' (line) is often referred to as a process or series of activities that

are seen as important. Smiley commands that Justin fulfill his duty, and complete the series of activities (bring him two slices of bread the next day). This shows his consistency in the self he wishes to project through his use of the *sabela* style.

Turn 5 shows Smiley get angry because Justin has dropped the food. He uses the word '*Minute'* which is essentially a threat, but more importantly ends his threat by telling Justin that if things don't go his way he will '*dala 'n nommer'* (literal translation: I will play a number/ do something). Discussions with the participants (including my informant) revealed that the word *nommer* is often used in conversation to describe something important, something that is definite, a given. As we will see later it is used in different contexts. In this context it forms part of a threat, as Smiley threatens that if his requirements are not met, he will do something serious.

Smiley leaves by saying '*salute'* which is again, a performative. This is a reminder of the quasi-military structure of the gangs to which they affiliate themselves. It also serves as a reminder to Justin that he should adhere to what has been demanded of him.

The structure of the number gangs, even though in a smaller scale on the school premises, means that every member has a place and in most cases this means that there is always someone higher up in the food chain. The following interaction took place soon after the boys had received the recorders and agreed to participate in this study. Smiley approaches a group of friends who also converse in *sabela* as he arrives. As he arrives they spot something strange in his shirt pocket and want to know what it is.

## Interaction 8

***[Smiley enters a group of friends]***

1.Smiley: *Phakamisa* {pəkəmisə}, wat se die manne*?.*

<Greeting, what are the men saying?>

2.Group: *Aweh* Smiley. <Hey Smiley>

3.Boy 1: *Whey* Smiley wat is daai ding my bru*?* Daai is ‘n *toe maak skrif!!*

*Minute!!.*

<Hey Smiley, what is that thing? That is a device that will be used to deceive/ betray us>

4.Boy 2: //Die man is besig om te record*!.*

<This man is busy recording>

5.Boy 1: //My bru ons vat soema daai ding!
<My brother, we’ll take that thing>

6.Smiley: (.)Wie gaan daai *krag weg gee* om die ding te vat? Wie? Loto is *gaagi*!.
<Who is going to give that power away and take this thing? Who? Loto is in/ cool/ with it>

***[Smiley leaves the company to fetch Moloto]***

7.Smiley: Loto*, kom skrif* net die *skibengas* {skɪbɛŋgəs} gou van die *nommer*.

<Moloto, come speak to these boys about this thing>

8.Moloto: (.)Wat *nommer?* <What thing?>

9.Smiley: kom net saam, los die. <Just come with me,

leave this>

***[They walk toward the crowd where Smiley was before]***

10.Moloto: *Whey* manne*, hoe change hulle?* <hey boys, how are things changing?>

11.Smiley: (.)*Skibengas* hier wil ons ding af vat*,* waar joune? In jou sak? <These wanna-bes want to take our things, where's yours? In your bag?>

12.Moloto: *Salute.* {səlut} *Whey,* Wie wil daai *krag af staan* om in my sak te krap*?* Julle weet mos ek *steek nou wild uit*. *Phakamisa*. {pəkəmisə} <Agreement. Hey, who wants to put their power aside and scratch in my bag?. You all know I will do something crazy>

13.Boy: (..)Ok bra, los ma. <Ok man, leave it>

***[Moloto leaves]***

14.Smiley: (..)Ek se mos vir julle manne *van die nommer. Loto* is *gaagi.* <I told you boys about this thing. Moloto is in/ with it/ cool with it>

Smiley approaches a group of friends and greets them. He greets, as usual, with the performative 'phakamisa'. The boys notice that Smiley is carrying something suspicious looking in his pocket, and one of the boys correctly identifies it to be a voice recorder. The boy then mentions to the rest that it is some sort of '*toe maak skrif* ' (form of deception). The word *'skrif'* translates to English as writing or reference to the written word. This is a word that is often used in *Sabela*, and is used in many different contexts (as I will show later). As we will see in a later interaction when the word *'skrif'* is mentioned it always refers to something that is serious, important and worthy of attention. In some way perhaps this speaks to the

power and authority of the written word, and when someone is to offer you a '*skrif*' you are to know that whatever is being referred to is important for you to hear, and important for you to take note of, and perhaps act upon.

Now that the other boys have realized that Smiley might be recording conversations that are taking place they immediately position him as a betrayer, and as possibly trying to deceive them[9]. They threaten to take the recorder from him but are very quickly brought back down to earth when they are told that his friend Moloto is 'cool' with the idea. We can see this when he says, '*Loto is gaagi*'. The word 'gaagi' is a shortened form of the commonly used *Sabela* word *'Skangaga'*, which is a term used to reveal contentment. E.g. An answer to the question 'How are you my friend?', could be 'I'm skangaga'. It is interesting to see that the youths have decided to 'reinvent' *Sabela* for their own use by shortening the word 'skangaga' to a simpler form in 'gaagi'. They have taken a notorious language and essentially 'facebooked' it, i.e. Made it easier, simpler, and more appealing to youths.

Smiley then leaves the company he is in and goes to fetch Moloto who it seems was not too far away. He tells Moloto that he needs him to come and speak to those 'skibengas' about the 'nommer'. The word skibenga, according to Moloto and Smiley in our interview, refers to a person who claims to be more than what they are. However, through discussion with the boys, I have realized that in the eyes of the speaker, the skibenga isn't all they think they are. Smiley wants Moloto to speak to the boys about the 'nommer' (number). This is essentially a direct reference to the Numbers gangs. The word 'nommer' carries similar power to the word 'skrif' as explained earlier, in the sense that it implies a large degree of importance to the situation. Earlier, the word *nommer* was used by Smiley as part of a threat, an affirmation that he would do something serious. In this case it is used as part of the plea to ask Moloto for help, to come and tell the rest of the boys about this *nommer*, this 'thing' that is real, and not as threatening as they think it is. This 'thing', the voice recorder, that is acceptable from their perspective.

Once Moloto enters the fray he offers a distinct display of the 'self' he is able to display, he proves his worth within the language marketplace, and does this through his expert command of the *sabela* style (turn 10). He poses an ultimatum of sorts to

[9]Participants were informed about their ethical obligations to inform whoever they come into contact with that they are carrying voice recording devices as part of a research study.

the rest of the boys by asking them who would want to 'put their power aside' and look in his bag to see if he is carrying a recorder. He begins his utterance with the word 'salute', which carries military ties as well as gang ties. As mentioned earlier the number gangs are run in a quasi-military style (Schurink, 1989). The word 'salute' is therefore considered an element of *Sabela* because it is a form of greeting. It also gives us a glimpse into his possible rank and authority in a gang. It is a word that is only used by Smiley once in the recorded data, when he speaks to Justin, who is clearly not part of a gang (interaction 7). Moloto tells the boys '*julle weet ek stiek nou wild uit*' (You all know I'll do something crazy/ wild/ violent). In this context the word *'stiek'* refers to the possibility of violence ensuing. The word 'stiek' is very similar to the Afrikaans word 'steek' (to stab), perhaps another indicator of what could be coming.

Once the crowd hear this threat being made, they reply with a simple phrase 'ok'. There is no use of elements of *Sabela*; no local variety of language; a simple conventional, internationally recognized 'ok'.

Moloto makes use of the usual performatives; *Whey* (Turn 10), *Salute, Phakamisa* (Turn12) as he portrays his powerful character in the group he has entered. He shows his power through his use of the *sabela* style. We can see his footing change when he assumes a powerful position once he enters the group. In turn 10, he simply asks Smiley what the problem is but once he comes into the presence of those who want to question his integrity he becomes more commanding. We can see this when he says, '*Whey* manne*, hoe change hulle?'. Whey* is the previously mentioned performative which announces his presence and *hoe change hulle'*, according to my informant is a term which questions someone's allegiance. '*Hoe change die nommer'* is the full term usually used which questions how the number is changing, the gang number, or the changing situation. He changes footing to announce his presence as the one who holds the stronger currency in this marketplace. As he speaks to Smiley he is calm, but once he reaches the group of boys who are questioning his integrity he portrays a self that is aggressive, and forceful. He poses a question to which he gets no real reply. It is important to note how he employs the *sabela* style to perform his power, while the other boys relinquish any power they possibly had by not making use of any sort of *sabela*.

Here we can see the power relationships playing out. Smiley has been seen with a recorder which he is carrying as a participant in a research project, but only once he lets the rest of his group of friends know that Moloto is taking part in the study too do the rest of them accept it as legitimate. The power then clearly lies with Moloto when he questions the group on who is willing to set their power aside to fight with him/ take him on. On two separate occasions the phrase about the power (krag) is brought up. I believe that Smiley only mentions this in turn 6 knowing that no one will challenge him if he brings the real power player into the fold. Once Moloto utters the words, the rest of the boys drop all *Sabela* they use. The fact that it was Moloto that came over and threatened the other boys shows that he carries more power and authority than Smiley does. He made use of the same language that Smiley did, but only once he spoke it did the other boys become submissive. We can therefore argue that the power does not lie with *sabela* and languaging alone, but also in the speaker who utters those words. Power is commanded by the words in conjunction with the speaker. This power is derived from larger structures within the gang discourse and have become embodied within the speaker. This grants capital which allows for power within particular contexts. His identity within this particular context allowed for more power to be allocated to him. In this linguistic marketplace, where all who are part of the conversation are seen as legitimate speakers, Moloto carries an inexplicable amount of power. He begins by using the word 'salute', which is not used at any other time during the recording process as a form of greeting, or announcing ones presence. Perhaps this puts him in a different league and shows that he carries some type of rank in the quasi-military hierarchy created within the local gangs that have formed outside of prison.

I have already highlighted the fickle nature of the power relationships that occur among the participants. This is further accentuated in the following interaction that shows how the power asserted through use of elements of *sabela* and through one's position in gang hierarchy can be superseded. The following interaction occurs as Moloto is walking through the playground when break time begins. A girl calls him over, and she speaks to him using *sabela.* She wants to inform him of something:

**Interaction 9**

***[Moloto walking through playground]***

1.Girl: *Whey* Loto kom gou hier, ek wil vir jou *skrif die nommer.* <Hey Moloto come here I want to tell you about something>

2.Moloto: H o e s o *?*
<What?/ How so?>

3.Girl: Kykie daai girl *Koppel* nou met n *skombizo* <Listen that girl is in a relationship with a wannabe gangster>

4.Moloto: *Watte Skombizo?* <Which gangster?>

5.Girl: VANNIE Mitchell's Plain, hy bly daar by daai darkie plek. Hy het a tattoo van haar naam op sy rug. En hy het a photo van jou en haar waar julle sit op die park. Hy het gesee ek moet se hy gaan jou vrek maak want jy KRAP DAA.

<From Mitchell's Plain, he lives there in a black/ African area. He has a tattoo of her name on his back, and he has a photo of the two of you where you were sitting in the park. He told me to tell you he's going to kill you because you are messing there (with that girl)>

6.Moloto: [..] *whey* ok

***[Moloto walks away]***

In interaction 9 above, Moloto walks through the playground and is called over by a girl who has some news to offer him. She grabs his attention with a performative '*whey'* and immediately assumes a footing of power and control. Throughout the recordings I have made I have not come across another girl speak so openly with Smiley or Moloto using elements of *sabela*. Pinnock (2016:132) writes that for many years 'girl gangs have been in the shadows of the city's gang phenomenon'. It is not often one would hear, see or know a female gang member in the Western Cape, so it is strange to hear a girl speaking the language of a male dominated criminal culture.

As previously stated the words 'skrif and 'nommer' refer to circumstances that carry importance. In this case both of these words are used in close proximity in turn 1. By making use of these powerful words, the girl sets the tone for a serious conversation that is about to ensue. I have discussed how these words carry much significance when used alone, so by using them in such close proximity Moloto must know that something rather serious is going on. Moloto's first reply already displays his footing, and the 'self' he wishes to portray. He now has recoiled to a more timid version of himself. We can see this when he replies with a simple Afrikaans phrase *'hoe so'* (How so?).

The girl explains to Moloto that the girl he is seeing is actually involved with a gangster. This gangster reports having seen photographs of Moloto and the girl sitting together at the park and has sent word to Moloto that he will be killed for his promiscuity. The girl makes use of many *Sabela* terms that have been introduced into the repertoire of the youths. Moloto again replies in an apprehensive manner when he replies using Kaaps Afrikaans with the *sabela* term she used. He asks,'WATTE *Skombizo?'* (Which gangster?). 'Watte' is a Kaaps term meaning 'which'.

This interaction shows Moloto in a vulnerable, rather than powerful position when he is told about another gangster who is looking for him. Once he is told that the other gangster is from an area that is more riddled with gangsterism, he does not utter another word of s*abela*. He simply says 'ok', which is a word he does not utter in any other of the recordings at any time. Much like the boys who 'relinquish power' when he started speaking in interaction 5, so too he takes a more submissive role and answers in simpler, refined language. The word 'OK' is not a word Smiley and Moloto would often use. Throughout the recordings I have found that words

such as ‘aweh’ or ‘is ja’ are often used to show agreement and understanding. The fact that he reverts to a globally accepted term such as ‘ok’, I read to be a sign of him relinquishing power after hearing the content of the conversation.

The girl he speaks to in this interaction has assumed a powerful position. She performs this persona from the beginning of the interaction as she gets his attention through her use of the *sabela* terms *‘whey’* and *‘skrif die nommer’.* Because of the content of the discussion, Moloto chooses to simply listen and acknowledge, not to show any retaliation, perhaps for the fear of what could happen, and that he might actually be harmed. It is clear from previous interactions that Moloto does have the ability to converse with her in the *sabela* style, thus we can assume that he chooses not to do so in this moment. He has the currency to trade within this marketplace, but the currency he holds is not deemed valuable in this particular interaction because of the content of the conversation. The possibility exists that whatever he was to reply would have been relayed to the *‘skombizo’* and that could create more problems.

The interactions that I have presented thus far all have involved the performance and negotiation of power relations. However Moloto and Smiley are not always negotiating relations of power. The following interaction indicates how a regular conversation takes place between two friends. Moloto leaves the classroom as soon as break begins and switches on his recorder. It sounds as though he is walking with a friend, and they are on their way to the restrooms.

## **Interaction 10**

1.Moloto: Ja my bru, laat ek ma die ding aan sit. [.] Het jy daai game gister aand gekyk, Messi my bru YOR!! Gevaaaaarlik!

<Yes my friend, let me rather put this thing on [.] Did you watch that game last night? Messi my friend, WOW. Dangerous!>

2.Friend: //Aweh my bru (laughs), daai ander team kannie vir daai man stoppie, niemand kan nie. Hy is BEFOK!!

<Yes me friend, that other team can't stop that man, no-one can. He is crazy/ too good>

3.Moloto: Aweh, net so waa, waa, waa goal! Hy score dan vir niks

<Yes, it was just like, was was was GOAL! He scares for nothing.>

4.Friend: //Is ja

<That is so>

5.Moloto: Os kyk ma wat gebeur next week sien jy, hulle moet weer speel.

<Lets see what happens next week you see, they need to play again>

6.Friend: *Aweh. Phakamisa* Oupa *(Greets a passer by)*

7.Moloto: *Hosh Oupa, wat dala jy dan*

<Hey Oupa, what are you playing/doing?>

8.Oupa: //*Aweh* manne, naai ek is *gaagi*

<Hey guys, no I'm all good>

This short conversation takes place as the boys leave the classroom. I think this is between Moloto and one of his long standing friends. They have a conversation about a football game that was played the previous evening. The conversation revolves around the skill of Lionel Messi, a footballer for FC Barcelona at the time. As they discuss the game and a certain player in particular, we can see that they use slang terms, but no words that are directly linked to *sabela*. Once they see someone else they immediately greet the other boy and begin using *sabela* (Turn 6). This provides an interesting insight into the time and place set aside for using *sabela*. When Moloto and his friend discuss a football game among themselves, as equals, there is no use of elements of *sabela* and therefore it seems that there is no need for them call on the use of elements of *sabela* from their repertoire. It has no place in that particular conversation. They converse and agree about something, with no evidence of a particular power dynamic in the conversation. However, as soon as they see another boy who perhaps affiliates to the same gang as they do, they immediately introduce elements of *sabela* into the conversation again. This could be to identify with the other boy, and to show that they too carry the same power and affiliation to the same camp. The footing they assume as they converse about the football game allows them to portray a person that has a love of sport, a friend with a similar interest. However the footing soon shifts so they can portray a 'self' who is affiliated to a gang, and thus a person with power.

## Discussion

My analysis and interpretations of the interactions involving Smiley, Moloto and their peers show how context is an important element to the power that is created through the use of *sabela*. As soon as Moloto and his friend are approached by another gang member, or someone who greets in the *sabela* performative manner ('phakamisa', interactions 3,7,8,9), the marketplace becomes one where they need to prove that they hold the currency to trade. This can clearly be seen in previous

interactions too (Interactions 1 &4). When the marketplace demands someone to be a particular kind of legitimate speaker, one can either be a part of the conversation or not, depending on the resources in one's linguistic repertoire.

The above interactions make it clear that there are many factors at play when it comes to elements of *sabela* being called on from the participants' linguistic repertoires. When these elements are called upon, by the speaker, at the right time, it carries power because it is used in a legitimate marketplace, and by the most legitimate speaker. This therefore begs the question: what makes the marketplace legitimate?, and what makes the speaker legitimate?

The largest determining factor for a legitimate market place for *sabela* languaging in the interactions presented seems to be social class and place. Douglas-Hamilton (1995) and Pinnock (2016) write of how gangsterism has become endemic to poverty stricken areas in the Western Cape. Youths who grow up in poverty stricken areas are more likely to be aware of gang languaging and rituals than those who are not. This is made clear in Interaction 2, where Smiley converses with a girl who clearly sees him and his gangster friends as others or as 'them'. Smiley and Moloto too admit that crossing to a register which appealed to her was crucial because she is 'that girl' from 'that place', implying that she considers herself superior because of the area in which she lives. The neighbourhood that Smiley, Moloto and their friends come from is vastly poverty stricken, and most people they do speak to in the data I have collected are likely to be from the same area. The boys tend to socialise exclusively with people from their area, and the girl they approached in Interaction 2 was only approached because she had the 'Good Food', thus making her appealing to them.

Another factor which influences the legitimacy of the marketplace is that the other participants in the interaction recognise the power that is carried by the speaker. Those who are listening to the speaker and must react to what is being said must recognise that the speaker carries power through the use of elements of *sabela*. A bidirectional relationship exists between the legitimate speaker and the legitimate market place in this sense. The legitimacy of the speaker and the legitimacy of the marketplace are co-constructed.

The legitimacy of the speaker is captured in the speaker's ability to call on elements of *sabela* from their linguistic repertoires at times when it carries most power. This

shows the intricate understanding they have of the resources available in their own linguistic repertoires. Changes in footing, and the ability to perform different identities through different language practices allow Smiley and Moloto to assert their power in particular ways. All interactions show how the individual who begins the performance with particular performatives, controls the outcome and asserts the power through altering the outcome. This is most evident in interactions 4, 5 and 6. Interaction 4 shows Moloto enter using the performative 'Salute' and question the power of the other participants in the conversation. Interaction 5 depicts how an unlikely power player in this context, a girl, asserts conversational power through her performative ability, and achieved footing. The content of the message she has, and her ability to draw on elements of *sabela* such as 'skrif' and 'nommer' from her repertoire allows her to achieve conversational power and limit Moloto's *sabela* use, and therefore his ability to assert power. Interaction 10 revolves around a simple conversation between friends, about a football match played the previous evening. Once a member of the same gang or camp approaches, he is greeted with a performative which shows Moloto and his friend's allegiance to the same camp. They change their footing to show that they too are part of that gang. The friend who approaches, Oupa, exerts a certain power with his presence, the power to alter the conversation and demand that elements of *sabela* be called on from the linguistic repertoire.

The argument I wish to put forward is that the real power achieved through languaging within the informal school setting lies within the individual's ability to show expert control over their linguistic repertoires, through knowing which specific resources to draw on in any given context. If the individual has the ability to move seamlessly between different social class groups, racial groups, and language groups they have greater ability to control the outcome of the conversations they have. And the ability to control the outcome of an interaction, and always allow it to happen to your own benefit illustrates that the individual has authority within many contexts. If an individual's linguistic repertoire contains elements of the language practices of all the different groups within the given schools community, it means that that individual has the ability to exert power in all those different contexts, as the above interactions have illustrated. And in terms of the use of *sabela*, as mentioned earlier, the power is in fact derived from greater structures which become embodied within the speaker as they draw on this resource.

Within the single school context, different linguistic market places exist. By having currency to trade and purchase in each of these market places, an individual has the power to control the outcome of each transaction.

It is important to recognize limitations to this research that could arise from the limited time period of data collection. Ethnographic research requires research to take place over a longer time period to prove trustworthiness of occurrences within the field. A key component in researching identity construction and performativity is a prolonged data collection process which can prove the re-occurance of certain happenings within the field.

# Chapter 5: Conclusion

## Overview of the study

This small scale linguistic ethnographic study focused on a particular kind of languaging among youths attending a school in a socio-economically restrained community on the Cape Flats of the Western Cape. Conceptualising language use, or languaging, as a deeply context embedded social practice that is differently valued depending on the linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu, 1977), I attempted to capture how two teenagers manage to call on different resources in their repertoires to successfully negotiate their way through interactions and managed to affect the outcomes of those interactions. My study aimed to answer the following questions:

**How does *sabela* function within the linguistic repertoires of two boys in informal spaces at a School on the Western Cape Flats?**

- **What resources form part of the two boys' linguistic repertoires?**
- **To what purpose and with what effect do they employ *sabela* as a resource within their linguistic repertoires?**

## Reflection

This study was aimed at investigating how the linguistic repertoires of the participants function within the informal spaces of the school. By approaching this study with the linguistic ethnography methodology I was enabled to analyze the many different factors that come into play when meaning is being made. Understanding the context of each interaction was crucial to understanding the social dynamics and discourses which shaped the interactions.

Firstly, I found that the research participants' linguistic repertoires were made up of Standard English and Afrikaans (as required by the school curriculum), Cape Flats

English, Kaaps, isiXhosa and elements of *sabela.* These resources available in their repertoire were easily called upon when the need arose. They were also called upon to achieve different outcomes in interaction with their peers. This is displayed in the interactions presented and analyzed where we see both Smiley and Moloto successfully negotiating their way through interactions by calling on multiple resources in short spaces of time.

Secondly, I was intrigued by the way in which the boys specifically deploy *sabela* as a resource within their linguistic repertoire. As explained earlier, *sabela* is a register that is associated with prison gangs, which have filtered out onto the streets of South Africa. The use of this language has filtered down into schools and has resulted in interactions in schools being one sided in terms of power in some cases. In Chapter 1 I argued that *sabela* can be termed as an antilanguage in line with the definition offered by Stone (1995). An anti language is the language of an anti-society and is centered around an exchange of meanings that are inaccessible to an outsider. This was made clear in my research. *Sabela* was only spoken by certain people in certain contexts to convey a sense of authority in the school space. It was even outright rejected by some interactants. It was not accessible to everyone.

Importantly, I wanted to understand the effect that calling on elements of *sabela* had on Smiley and Moloto's interactions with peers. My overall findings were that when *sabela* was used by a legitimate speaker in a legitimate context it carried much power. As shown in my analysis of interactions 8 (where Smiley is challenged about carrying a recorder and 9 (where Moloto is warned about staying away from a particular girl), the speaker who is able to use *sabela* with interactants, who recognise its legitimacy, is able to exercise power and control the interaction. In some cases this power even forces other parties into silence.

As shown in Chapter 4, and mentioned above, some interactants reject this language use outright, and refuse to converse with someone who speaks it. This shows how it is not a given that the use of *sabela* carries power in every interaction.

However, it does seem to be the case that when people from the same poverty stricken communities interact, and one draws on *sabela* from his/ her repertoire, that person carries power in that interaction.

By calling on different resources from their linguistic repertoires, the participants were able to perform different identity positions and change footing in a way that

allowed them to portray a certain 'self'. This is nicely illustrated with Smiley demonstrating his expert ability to change footing in a conversation and perform a different identity position to achieve his goal of getting food from 'langkop' girl (Interaction 4).

Thirdly, the most surprising interaction to me in the data analysed is the interaction between Moloto and a girl who brings a warning message from another boy/ gangster outside the school (Interaction 9). In this interaction, the girl is powerfully positioned because of her use of *sabela* and the important information which she can offer. I was under the impression that the world of gangsters is ruled mostly by male figures but this interaction shows how it can be ruled somewhat by information, or the ability to convey information in a particular way.

Finally, by studying the boys and their language ability so closely I was able to develop a new found respect for their ability to use their vast linguistic resources to negotiate meaning on a day to day basis. Mainstream schooling seeks only to test particular language abilities, those that are associated with the Standard forms of a language. This requires learners to use correct grammar, perfect syntax and a broad vocabulary, in accordance with the features of the standard variety of the language of learning and teaching (LOLT). However, given the eclectic linguistic marketplaces these students live and communicate in in their daily experience, knowledge of the standard form of any language carries little to no value. All communication happens across a spectrum of different linguistic resources, i.e. Standard English and Afrikaans (as required by the school curriculum), Cape Flats English, Kaaps, isiXhosa and, occasionally, elements of *sabela.* Looking at the academic attainment of the majority of students from such multilingual marketplaces it is clear that mainstream schooling fails to recognize the value of such multi-semiotic communication and the expertise that the boys have displayed in communicating in different contexts. These boys in particular were seen as non-achievers. Yet this research has shown them as resourceful communicators.

When I embarked on this study I chose these boys as my research participants because I viewed them only as boys involved with gangs, that have ability to employ *sabela* as a resource from their linguistic repertoires. This research has enabled me to see them as wealthy languagers, able to trade in many currencies as they negotiate their way through busy days in a multilingual marketplace.

## Recommendations for future research

There is a general sparsity of research into youth language use in the Western Cape. Schools are a melting pot of different cultures and languages, and the informal spaces of these schools is a gathering place for these different cultures and languages and offers them a space to display their languaging expertise. More research should be done into youth language use in the Western Cape.

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# Appendix 1: Letter of Approval (Principal)

The Principal
xx High School
x August 201x

Dear Mr x
**Request for permission to conduct research in xx High School**

I am Marco Saville and am writing to you as a postgraduate student completing a Master's degree at the University of Cape Town. I am currently conducting research about young people's informal language use within the informal school community, i.e outside of the classroom context. I would like to ask permission to conduct this research in your school. In this project we are looking at how learners use language outside of the classroom, for example, what languages they use when they are speaking to their friends during interval times at school. This research has been approved by the University of Cape Town as well as the Western Cape Department of Education.

The overall aims of the project are to:

- research the informal language use of Grade x learners, within the informal school community
- discover the beliefs about language present amongst the learners, concerning their informal language use

The research will only be conducted at your institution. With permission of parents and learners I plan to record the informal language use of the learners during the interval times at the school over one school week. This will require two learners who wish to participate to wear an electronic recording device at break times during the week. After this learners will be interviewed for a combined period or 60 minutes (2 or 3 intervals).

I will seek written permission from individuals whom we wish to interview and record and from the parents/guardians of all the learners in the selected Grad xx class. At no stage in the research will the identity or location of the school, the identities of any of its staff and the identities of any learners be revealed. The school and any research subjects referred to will be given pseudonyms. The school may withdraw permission for conducting the research at any time. I would be happy to answer any questions relating to the proposed research project and to address the SGB if necessary.
If you are willing to grant permission for the research to be conducted in your school, please sign in the space below.

Yours sincerely,

Marco Saville
Researcher
marcosaville@gmail.com
The signatures below grants permission for the above mentioned research to be carried out at this school.

---------- ---------- STAMP
Principal Date

---------- ——————————————

Chairperson: School Governing Body Date

# Appendix 2: Letter of consent (Parent)

x August 201x

Dear Parent/Guardian,

**Request for permission to conduct research in xx High School**

I am Marco Saville and am writing to you as a postgraduate student completing a Masters degree at the University of Cape Town. I am currently conducting research about young people's informal language use within the informal school community, i.e outside of the classroom context. I would like to ask permission to conduct this research in your school. In this project we are looking at how learners use language outside of the classroom, for example, what languages they use when they are speaking to their friends during interval times at school. This research has been approved by the University of Cape Town as well as the Western Cape Department of Education.

With their permission, students will be required to carry an electronic recording device during interval for five school days. After which they will be interviewed about their language use. The normal school day activities will not be interrupted in any way. With their permission, some learners will be interviewed in a group.

Participation in all activities is entirely voluntary and will not take place without written permission from the learner. If you do not wish your child to participate, s/he will not be disadvantaged in any way. If you do allow your child to participate, s/he may withdraw at any point.

The name of your child will not be recorded. S/he will be given a false name (pseudonym) in the research.

I would be happy to answer any questions regarding the proposed research project.

Please sign below to indicate whether you grant permission or not.

I, _____ (full name) give permission for my child_____ to participate in the research project.

I, _____ (full name) do not give permission for my child_____ to participate in the research project.

Yours sincerely,

Marco Saville
Researcher
marcosaville@gmail.com

# Appendix 3: Letter of consent (Learner)

August x, 201x

Dear Learner,

**Request for permission to conduct research in your class at xx High School**

I am Marco Saville and am writing to you as a postgraduate student completing a Masters degree at the University of Cape Town. I am currently conducting research about young people's informal language use within the informal school community, i.e outside of the classroom context. I would like to ask permission to conduct this research in your school. In this project we are looking at how learners use language outside of the classroom, for example, what languages they use when they are speaking to their friends during interval times at school. This research has been approved by the University of Cape Town as well as the Western Cape Department of Education.

With your permission, I would like you to record your conversations at interval over the period of 5 days. Your school day activities and programmes will carry on as normal. You will be required to carry an electronic voice recorder during interval times of 5 school days. After which, I would interview you with some friends about the kind of language used in the recorded talk and what you think about it.

Your name will not be recorded in any way. You can decide that you do not want to take part at any point by telling your parent/guardian, teacher, principal or the researcher at your school. You will not be disadvantaged in any way if you do not want to take part.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask me or your teacher for clarification. I will be willing to explain things in more detail if you so wish.

Attached to this letter are four different forms where you can give permission to participate in the different activities or not. Please fill in your name for the different activities you agree to and leave it blank for those you do not wish to participate in.

Yours sincerely,

Marco Saville
Researcher
marcosaville@gmail.com

A**. Learner Consent sheet – Audio-Recording of five days**

I _____ consent to wearing a micro-phone at interval times on five school days in order to be recorded for the UCT study on informal language use in urban schools. I understand that:

- I may withdraw from the study at any time
- I can decide that I want the recording or parts of it deleted at the end of the day and the researcher will check with me before taking the recorder back. I can also switch the recorder off if I want to.
- the audio recording will not be heard by any person other than the researchers

- I should tell my friends that I am wearing the micro-phone
- I and others I interact with will be given false names (pseudonyms) to be used in the transcription of the interaction and my name will never be revealed in discussion of the research
- My participation is voluntary and I will not be disadvantaged if I decide later not to participate.

Signed_____

Date_____

**B. Consent form- Interviews**

I _____ consent to being interviewed by a UCT researcher for the study on informal language use in urban schools. I understand that:

- I may withdraw from the study at any time
- participation in this interview is voluntary
- the interview will take 45- 60 minutes (2-3 break times)
- I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.

Signed_____

Date_____

**C. Consent form – Audio – Recording of interviews**

I _____ consent to my interview with a UCT researcher for the study on informal language use in urban schools being tape-recorded. I understand that:

- I may withdraw from the study at any time
- the tape recording will not be heard by any person other than the researchers at any time
- I will be given a false name (pseudonym) to be used in the transcription of the interaction and my name will not be revealed in discussion of the research

Signed_____

Date_____

# Appendix 4: International Phonetic Alphabet

vowels

| IPA | examples |
|---|---|
| ʌ | cup, luck |
| a: | arm, father |
| æ | cat, black |
| ə | away, cinema |
| e | met, bed |
| ɜ: | turn, learn |
| ɪ | hit, sitting |
| i: | see, heat |
| ɒ | hot, rock |
| ɔ: | call, four |
| ʊ | put, could |
| u: | blue, food |
| aɪ | five, eye |
| aʊ | now, out |
| əʊ | go, home |
| eə | where, air |
| eɪ | say, eight |
| ɪə | near, here |
| ɔɪ | boy, join |
| ʊə | pure, tourist |

consonants

| IPA | examples |
|---|---|
| b | bad, lab |
| d | did, lady |
| f | find, if |
| g | give, flag |
| h | how, hello |
| j | yes, yellow |
| k | cat, back |
| l | leg, little |
| m | man, lemon |
| n | no, ten |
| ŋ | sing, finger |
| p | pet, map |
| r | red, try |
| s | sun, miss |
| ʃ | she, crash |
| t | tea, getting |
| tʃ | check, church |
| θ | think, both |
| ð | this, mother |
| v | voice, five |
| w | wet, window |
| z | zoo, lazy |
| ʒ | pleasure, vision |
| dʒ | just, large |